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DISCOURSE

ON THE

NATURE AND SUBJECTS

OF

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

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B O S T O N :

Printed by N. COVERLY and R. HODGE.

M. DCC. LXXXI.

DISCOURSE

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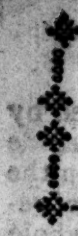
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A DISCOURSE on the Nature and Subjects of CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 19, 20.

"Go ye therefore and teach (or disciple) all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even unto the End of the World. Amen."

THE FIRST PART.

On the NATURE of CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

THESE words contain the instructions which Christ gave his apostles, immediately before his ascension into heaven. And we have here their Mission, with the commission and authority given them for the execution of that office in the church, to which they were ordained.---The Object they were to attend to in their ministry, which was to make all nations disciples, baptizing them in the name of the divine Trinity, teaching them to observe all the commandments of Christ.---And the Encouragement they were to act upon in this great undertaking; even the promise of Christ's presence with them to the end of the world; implying, that the gospel ministry was to continue, in them and their successors, till time should be no more; that they should be furnished for, and assisted in their work; and that their labours should be crowned with success.

The distinct consideration of these several particulars, I shall not now enter upon. My design is only to treat of CHRISTIAN BAPTISM, the institution of which, as a standing gospel ordinance, we have in the words before us---A subject very necessary to be enquired into at this time, when our churches are charged by some among us with having so far departed from the gospel rule, in the administration of this ordinance, as that we have no true Baptism, and are therefore unfit for christian communion.

communion. Even the institution of water baptism is denied by some.---Others deny that Sprinkling is a lawful and valid mode of administration, or that Infants are proper subjects. On the contrary, they hold that adult believers only are capable of receiving a valid christian baptism; and that dipping the whole body into water is absolutely necessary, and the only regular, lawful and valid mode of sacramental washing; and therefore that our baptisms are a nullity, as being administered in an unwarrantable way, to unqualified, and so incapable subjects.

Such charges as these we have often heard advanced with a surprizing confidence, and with an impatience and contempt of all contradiction, which, though it may perhaps amaze and stagger weak and unsettled minds, is rather a sign of ignorance and self-conceit, than of a sound mind, or honest heart. When persons affect a dogmatical and infallible strain of discoursing on disputable points, this is so far from being any evidence of their being in the right, that it may well breed in us a suspicion that they either have but a shallow and superficial understanding, or else that this confidence is only an artifice to maintain a weak cause, which will not bear the test of fair and calm reasoning. The scriptures will not encourage us to expect any superior wisdom, or understanding in those who are Wise in their own conceit. "God will guide the meek in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way. But the scorner seeketh wisdom and findeth it not."

If they who set themselves to decry and disparage our administrations, will undertake, in the spirit of meekness, to point out to us, by the light of divine revelation, any irregularities which ought to be reformed; we ought most seriously and candidly to attend to them. But if they seek to carry their point by noise and confidence, it need not move us---The scriptures are our only and sufficient rule of faith, worship, and practice. "To the law and to the testimony; if men speak not according to this rule, (what illuminations soever they may boast of) there is no light in them."

The whole subject of our present enquiry, may be reduced to these two points, viz. What is Christian Baptism? And who are the proper subjects of it? These I shall endeavour to resolve by the light of divine revelation---And as I claim no dominion over the faith of any, so I would speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say.

But before I proceed to the discussion of the several points which may come under examination, I would premise a few postulates, or rules of interpreting the scriptures, which I think cannot reasonably be refused, or objected to.

1. The scriptures are always to be understood in that sense of the words, which, taken in their connection, is most natural, plain, obvious, and familiar to us, and those for whose instruct-

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on they were primarily designed. The literal sense is always to be preferred to a figurative one, unless there appear plain and good reasons to the contrary. For instance, though the word baptize in our text is sometimes taken in a figurative sense, for the giving of the Holy Spirit; yet as it literally and primarily signifies a washing with water, and this sense was most obvious and familiar to the Apostles, and is so to us, and the word commonly bears this sense in the new testament, and there appears no incongruity with the context, or inconsistency with other parts of the scriptures, in understanding it thus in this place; we therefore conclude, that it is a Literal and Water Baptism that is here intended. On the contrary, when Christ tells his Apostles, "I am with you to the end of the world." We cannot understand the words literally, of his bodily presence. For, as the apostles were to disperse into different and remote parts of the world, it was impossible that Christ should be always with them bodily. And besides, he was immediately to ascend to, and remain in heaven, till the end of the world. This must therefore be understood Figuratively, of those gracious assistances which he would afford to them.

2. The scripture is the best and surest interpreter of Scripture, and if the meaning of any word or phrase seems doubtful, we must compare it with other places, where a like expression is used, or where the same subject is treated of perhaps in plainer language: and that interpretation is to be adhered to, which is most consonant to the general language and doctrine of the scriptures themselves. Thus the word Baptize, in our text, may be compared with, and explained by the words of the apostle, in which he says, "That the church is sanctified by the washing of water with the word:" whence we are to conclude that water Baptism is a gospel ordinance: and that Baptism signifies a washing.

3. The scriptures are to be understood as containing not only those truths which are expressly asserted, but also those which are plainly implied. For example, it is not expressly asserted in our text that Baptism is to be a standing ordinance in the church to the end of the world. But then, as Christ has promised to be with his ministers in the execution of their commission to the end of the world; and as they were in this their commission instructed to baptize, as well as teach; it is a fair consequence, that the duties, as well as the encouragements contained in their commission, were to continue to the end of time; and so baptism is a standing ordinance. And that this is the true meaning, implied, though not expressed in the text.

4. That is the true sense of scripture which best agrees with the original text. Though the scriptures were written in Hebrew and Greek, by divine inspiration, yet they were not translated by divine inspiration. Some words are not exactly translated; and are to be corrected by the original. Our text, I think, is an example. This clause, "go teach all nations,"

6 *Rules of interpreting the Scriptures.*

ought rather to be understood, "Go make all nations disciples," for so the Greek word properly signifies. To teach or indoctrinate is expressed by another word, which we have in the latter verse of our text: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded.

5. That interpretation of scripture is to be adhered to, which gives the best, aptest, and most instructive sense to the words: unless it should appear that a different sense was intended. Thus for example, I think it makes better sense to read our text according to the amendment proposed; "Go make all nations disciples; baptizing and teaching them, &c." than to read it according to our translation, "Go teach all nations; baptizing them--teaching them;" where the repetition of the word Teach, seems needless and uninformative.

6. The practice of the primitive church, so far as it is known, is to be attended to, in case doubts should arise concerning the meaning and proper administration of gospel ordinances. The meaning of precepts is sometimes cleared and ascertained by authentic precedents. And we have no precedents which are so much to be regarded by us as the practice of the church in its earliest and purest state; especially in the apostolic age. For example, in our text baptism with water is not expressly mentioned; but we know that in the apostolic and primitive church, baptism with water was practised: which seems to put the matter out of all reasonable doubt, that it is a water baptism that is here intended.

Keeping these rules in mind, let us search the scriptures upon the subjects of our present enquiry. And the first thing to be considered is, "What is Christian Baptism?"

In our text, Christ commissions his ministers to baptize the nations. We borrow the word Baptism from the Greeks; among whom it was commonly used to signify a wetting or washing in some mode, as I shall shew more particularly in the sequel. Among christians, baptism is that Religious and Sacramental washing with Water, which Christ has appointed as the token and sign of our admission into the visible church, and of our having an interest in the privileges, and coming under the obligations of the gospel covenant. That Christ did institute the rite of baptism, or washing with water in the name of the Trinity, our text, as compared with other places of scripture, is a clear and sufficient proof; notwithstanding the cavils of those who would persuade us that only a spiritual and figurative Baptism is required of christians.

For, how unreasonable is it to depart needlessly from the primary, literal, plain, and obvious sense of the word; and embrace a mystical and metaphorical interpretation? The apostles would naturally understand that a washing of the body was enjoined. For this was a rite that they were familiarly acquainted with, and had

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Dipping not necessary to Christian Communion. 7

had often administered themselves. It was, it seems, a common token of discipleship, during the ministry of John the baptist, and Jesus Christ. The word, Baptize, is commonly in the new testament to be understood of a washing with water. The apostle's words shew, that the christian baptism is of this kind. For he says, "that Christ sanctifies his church with the washing of water, by the word *." And it is accordingly manifest that the apostles did administer a water baptism: "Can any man forbid water," says Peter, at the house of Cornelius †, that these should not be baptized: the Eunuch too was baptized with water ¶, and so no doubt, all those were of whose baptism we have account. And as we must believe that the apostles acted agreeable to the commission and instructions they received from Christ; so their practice is a most authentic precedent, whereby the nature and true meaning of christian baptism, which is to be administered to all nations, is illustrated and ascertained. And it has accordingly been constantly practised in the church, ever since the apostles.

But let it suffice to have hinted thus briefly at the proofs we have of the divine institution of water baptism. There are other points which will need to be more particularly discussed. Some, who agree with us in acknowledging, that water baptism is a gospel ordinance, yet hold "that dipping is the only lawful and " valid way of administering it; and that pouring or sprinkling " of water is no true baptism."

This matter must therefore be enquired into: for, though it may seem of no great importance in itself, in which mode the ordinance is administered, (and indeed with us it is a matter of indifference) yet the advocates for dipping, generally lay so much stress upon this particular mode, as makes a scandalous schism in the church, whereby the edification of the body of Christ in holiness, love, peace and comfort, is greatly obstructed.

That dipping is a lawful mode of baptism we freely grant: And we should scarce think it worth while to dispute the matter with any, who should be of opinion, that this is the most proper and significant way; if they would not hold it to be absolutely necessary, and so place the essence of the ordinance in what we verily believe to be but an indifferent circumstance. We are ready to administer the ordinance by immersion occasionally, if it be desired. But as we look upon ourselves, as being at liberty in respect of the mode of baptism, we think it our duty to "Stand " fast in this liberty;" and not be intangled with the yoke of bondage, which we cannot find that Christ has laid upon us.

But there are some, who are not content to enjoy all the liberty in our churches that they can reasonably desire for themselves: with them there is no true baptism without dipping: nor will they have christian communion with any but those who have gone into the water. According to them, there are no Gospel churches in the world, except of those who have been dipped.

None

* Eph. v. 26.

† Acts x. 47.

¶ Acts viii. 36, 38, 39.

3 *Reasons against the necessity of Dipping.*

None are regularly called or sent of God to preach the word, and administer gospel ordinances, till they have been dipped. None may presume to come, or be admitted to the table of the Lord, till they have been dipped. And thus, as much as in them lies, they unchurch all the churches in the world, except those who agree with them in the mode of baptizing.----They deny the call and mission of their ministers; invalidate and nullify their ordinances, and excommunicate thousands, whom they cannot deny to be eminent for faith and holiness; and, in a word, make the door of the visible church so much narrower than Christ has made the gate of Heaven, that they reject far the greater part of those whom Christ receives.

Now, however willing we are to have Christian communion with all who, in a judgment of charity, are disciples of Christ; yet if we cannot have it, unless we will discard the greater part of our christian brethren; deny the missions and call of those, whose ministry has been the means of our own conversion and edification, deny the validity of those ordinances, which have so often been breasts of nourishment and consolation to us, and renounce our baptism, which we are conscientiously persuaded is both valid and regular; this we cannot consent to.---And if any make this a ground of separation from us, let all who have imbibed the spirit of christianity judge, whether it be our fault; and whether such rigidity in a matter so circumstantial, is agreeable to the meek and charitable spirit of the Gospel, or whether it does not rather look too much like pharisaical superstition, to say no worse.

It methinks our opponents have more reason to question the validity of their own administration, than to deny ours, upon the account of such irregularities as they charge upon us. For they cannot deny that the baptism which is administered in their communions was received at first by their predecessors, from the hands of such as, according to their principles, were unbaptized, and consequently could not be regularly authorized to administer the ordinance. If they think sprinkling to be no true baptism, much more have they reason to doubt the validity of immersion, when performed by an unbaptized and unauthorized administrator. And, if the first baptisms of that sect, when they first sprung up, were invalid, how can those administrations be thought valid and regular, which depend upon them.

We must therefore conclude, that dipping cannot be essential to baptism and Christian communion. The consequences are not to be endured.---The difficulties this principle will lead to, are inextricable.---We never can be satisfied that there is any true church, or valid baptism and ordinances in the world, upon these narrow principles.---And, as a farther presumptive argument against the absolute necessity of dipping, let it be considered, that as baptism is enjoined on all the disciples of Christ, the outward rite is doubtless, such as may be applied to all, whatever their circumstances may

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may be.---But there are many who cannot be dipped without extreme inconvenience and danger. In some parts of the world, water cannot be obtained for the most necessary uses, without great difficulty and expence. How then can the poor get such large supplies as are necessary for an immersion? In cold climates, and in the winter season, it would be dangerous to most, and, without a miracle, fatal to many to be plunged under water. Can we suppose that Christ has required it, as an indispensable duty, that those should be dipped, who are so sick and weak, that it would endanger their lives to wash their hands, or be exposed for a minute to the cold air? And yet there is no doubt but it may be the duty of such to receive baptism.---Can we think it credible, that Christ's easy yoke and light burden should, in the case of baptism, prove much more grievous and heavy, in many instances, than even the yoke of circumcision.

These considerations are certainly of so much weight, that the necessity of dipping ought not to be insisted on, unless there be clear and cogent reasons for it. The substance of what is pleaded in favour of this mode, is reduceable to these five heads:

"That the proper meaning of the word Baptize, always implies dipping.

"That the scriptural examples of baptism were administered in this way.

"That this mode of administration is plainly pointed out, when the Apostle says, "We are buried with Christ in baptism."

"That dipping only answers to and fitly represents the thing signified in baptism.

"That the primitive church administered the ordinance by dipping."

On the contrary, we think, that the necessity of dipping cannot be argued from any of these topics; but that they will furnish us with a good warrant in favour of the mode of affusion or sprinkling. Let us examine the matter distinctly.

And our first enquiry is, what is the true and proper meaning of the word Baptize, and whether it always implies dipping? We grant that the institution of Christ requires whatever is essential to a true Baptism; but more than this cannot be held necessary. Now, we have no sort of evidence, that the word Baptize always implies dipping; but it plainly appears to be of a larger and more general signification. It properly imports a wetting, washing, bathing, in any mode, either by dipping or sprinkling, or bleeding, or weeping, or otherwise. In proof of this we appeal,

In the first place, to those who are acknowledged to have been best skilled in the Greek language. All the Lexicons and critics, so far as I have found, agree, that the word signifies to wet, or wash, as well as to dip. And if any who assert, that dipping is constantly implied, have pretended, that the learned masters of the Greek held with them, it is certainly a misrepresentation.

There

There has not one been found of any character or note, so saying or intimating, but quite the contrary, they do with one consent explain the word as I have said. And they have shewn by clear and manifold examples from Greek writers, that washing or wetting, in whatever mode, whether sprinkling or dipping, is Baptism.

But it is said by some, "That the native, primary, and only proper meaning of the word Baptism, is dipping: That it signifies washing only, consequentially and improperly: That it is only such washing as supposes, and is effected by dipping, that is expressed by this word: That the primary and proper sense is to be preferred to a consequential and improper one." To these several allegations I would reply;

We have no certainty that dipping is the primary and native signification of this word, or that washing or wetting is a consequential or secondary sense; though it is true, that some learned men have been of that opinion. I should think, that wetting bids fairest to be the first native, and original import of the word: For this is the essential idea (if I may so speak) which is always connected with, and implied in every true and proper baptism. But we have many undeniable instances, in writers sacred and profane, where the word Baptism is used to express a wetting, without any dipping at all. Some of these I shall have occasion to mention presently. But, whatever the primary sense of the word may be (which I leave to the critics, it being a matter of no consequence) certain it is, that washing, in general, without restriction, to any mode, is a true and proper baptism, by the general acknowledgement of the learned*. And if we should admit that this is not

And yet Dr. Gill has the confidence to assert, in the face of the public, without any proof, that "the word Baptize signifies always to dip, or to wash by dipping; and never to pour or sprinkle."--Answer to Clark, page 77, directly contrary to the general and declared sense of the most learned critics:--"Christ no where requireth dipping, (says Dr. Featly) but only baptizing; which word, (as Hesychius, Stephanus, Scapula, and Budæus, the great masters of the Greek tongue, make good by very many instances and allegations out of classic writers) importeth no more than ablution, or washing." Says Ravanellus, "Baptism signifies immersion, and also sprinkling." And Leigh, in his *Critica Sacra*, says, That the word Baptizo signifies, "To sprinkle or wash one's body sacramentally."--Dr. Lightfoot, says, "The word baptism does not always denote immersion, but sometimes washing only, or even sprinkling." Mastricht says, "It signifies washing, either by sprinkling or dipping." And I know not why the Latin Dictionaries are not as good authorities in the case, as the Greek Lexicons. According to

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not the primary, but a secondary and consequential meaning, what proof, probability, or presumption can we gather from thence, that this is not the true sense that Christ meant the words should bear, in the institution of the ordinance of baptism? A man must be very inattentive to the nature of language, who needs to be informed, that the native and primary meaning of words, is not the only meaning in which they may be commonly and properly used: And that by custom, the original signification of numberless words is changed, enlarged, or restricted. It may seem needless to give examples for the illustration of so obvious a remark. A proclamation primarily signifies something uttered, proclaimed, or published, with a loud voice; yet, as the word is commonly used and understood, this mode of publishing is not at all implied or intimated. An infant primarily signifies a child unable to speak: But we understand by it any child under the age of discretion. And, to add another example, which may be a good parallel with the word Baptize: To Bathe, in the primary sense, may perhaps imply an immersion; and yet it is commonly used to express a wetting, or washing in other ways; either by dipping, or pouring, or dropping on, or applying wet clothes, as is most convenient. And, a man would be ridiculous who should contend, when ordered to bathe any part of his body, that dipping is absolutely necessary, however inconvenient, and dangerous; and that because bathing primarily signifies dipping, as he supposes. Whether a primary or a secondary sense of any word is to be preferred, as the true sense intended, can only be determined by other considerations. In short, whatever be the primary meaning of the word baptize, which is uncertain, it is however agreed by all critics of note, that it signifies washing or wetting in general, without restriction to any particular mode; and particularly such a washing as is not effected by dipping. We have not the slightest presumption, from any thing that appears in the institution of Christian baptism, that the word is not there to be understood in the same indeterminate manner, or that Christ meant to confine his disciples to any particular mode. Washing, in general, in any convenient mode, must therefore be presumed to be the true intent of the institution: For, as the words of the institution fairly admit of this interpretation, and nothing of any weight can be objected against it; and as it is not credible,

these, the word Baptizo signifies to wash, to sprinkle, as well as to dip. And I suppose none will say the word signifies otherwise in Latin than in Greek. 'Tis easy, but needless to multiply authorities to the same purpose. However, we blame no one for dissenting from all of them, if he can support himself in it with good reasons. But, for a man to set his own naked, unproved assertion, in opposition to the judgment of the learned in general; what must such a man think of himself---and of his readers!

credible, that a mode of washing, so inconvenient, difficult, hazardous, and even impracticable as dipping must sometimes be, should be enjoined on all; the sense we have given is in this case the preferable sense, and has every advantage to recommend it.

But, perhaps, it may be said, "That critics are not infallible, and it may be suspected that they are wrong, in saying, that washing or wetting in general, in whatever mode, is expressed and meant by the word Baptism."

I answer; in questions concerning the true meaning of words, the judgment of the learned, though not infallible, is doubtless of very considerable weight; and especially when we find a general consent among them. And that there certainly is upon this point, that washing or wetting, without respect to the mode, is Baptism, according to the usage of the word by Greek writers. But if any are yet unsatisfied, we must examine the matter further; whether it can certainly be made to appear that the word bears the sense which has been said.

They who have been at the pains to examine the Greek classics, (Dr. Wall in particular) have proved by clear and manifold examples, that those ancient writers were wont to use the word Baptise to express a washing or wetting, even where there was no dipping at all, but only a sprinkling. But I think it will be needless to enquire, how the word was commonly understood by heathen writers. It is the scriptural sense alone that we are searching after. If this can be ascertained we need no more.

Now, the Apostles have explained baptism to mean no more nor less than washing with water, and never once make use of any word to express it by, or any phrase or form of expression, that signifies or implies dipping. They certainly knew the true intendment of the word in the institution. If we can find how they understood the matter, we may be sure that we have found the true and preferable sense, let men call it a consequential improper sense, or what they please. Paul gives us the Scriptural sense of the word Baptism, when he says, Eph. v. 2. That "Christ sanctifies his church with the washing of water by the word." That baptism is meant by the washing with water I suppose will not be denied. And these words shew that a washing with water is a true baptism: From whence we may fairly conclude, that it is the washing with water, and not any particular mode, that is intended by Christ in the institution of baptism. We have the very same description of baptism in Heb. x. 22, 23. "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, let us hold fast the profession of our faith," &c. And many suppose that baptism is meant by the "washing of regeneration." Tit. iii. 5. And once more, the outward baptismal washing is described as "A putting away the filth of the flesh." 1 Pet. iii. 21. In all these descriptions it is remarkable that

that there is not the least hint of dipping, as any way implied in baptism; but the whole account we have of the matter, all that we can learn of the nature of this sacred rite is, that it is "a washing with water."

Now, if dipping had been the only and necessary mode, is it any ways credible that the apostles should always describe it as a mere washing, and never once use any word or phrase concerning it from which we can infer immersion. It is certainly a fault in writing, needlessly to use words of an indeterminate meaning, and which tend to lead the reader into a wrong apprehension of the subject. And can we think that the inspired apostles were so lax and inaccurate in their accounts of baptism, as constantly to leave out the very essence of the ordinance, and not point out that mode of administration, without which the washing is a mere nullity. The language they wrote in affords a variety of words signifying immersion, some of which they make use of on other occasions, but never once to express the rite of baptism.

But it has been said by some that the word *Lavo*, to wash, properly implies dipping, and not sprinkling or affusion. But this can never be made to appear, and we have plain evidence to the contrary. The washing of Polyrates' face with the rain is expressed by this word*. So is the washing the apostles stripes by the jailor; which cannot be thought to have been done by dipping them under water, but by the affusion of some proper Bath. The same word is used to express Christ's washing us from our sins in his own blood. But the application of Christ's blood for our purification is always expressed by a sprinkling of it, never by our being dipped in it. In the 51st Psalm, according to the Greek version---these words in v. 2. Wash me from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin; are thus explained in the 7th v. Sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be clean. All which shews that sprinkling or affusion is a Washing. Nor can we conclude from the apostle's speaking of having our bodies washed in pure water, that a dipping the whole body is necessary, or even a washing the whole body in any mode. When Mary poured a box of ointment on Jesus' head he calls it an anointing of his body. Nor is dipping required in order to the putting away the filth of the flesh. 1 Pet. iii. 21. The purification of the flesh, in the scriptural sense, was effected by sprinkling, as well as dipping. Heb. ix. 13.

But to proceed, The word baptize is used in scripture to express such washings as did not require, and were not effected by dipping. In Luk. xi. 38. we read, that a Pharisee who had invited Jesus to dine with him, marvelled that he had not first Washed. The Greek word is Baptized. Here observe, that Jesus omitted to wash before dinner according to the Jewish custom, which was the reason why the Pharisee wondered; and that this Washing

* Herodotus.

was properly called a Baptism. But how were the Jews wont ordinarily to wash before their meals? Did they dip themselves under water? If not, here is a plain proof, and example of a washing that is called a baptism, without such a dipping. Now if we turn to Mark 7th, we shall see what that washing was that was customary among the Jews before eating. "When the Pharisees and some of the Scribes saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews except they wash their hands oft eat not. And when they come from the market, except they wash (the Greek is, except they are baptized) they eat not." This shews, that in the language of the new testament a person is said to be baptized, when a small part of his body is washed. It is further to be observed, that the word Baptize is here explained by another Greek word (*nipto*) which signifies no more than washing in general, and which does not imply dipping, as all acknowledge; and in this place signifies no more than the washing of the hands. And though the hands may be washed by dipping them, yet as this may as well be done by pouring water on them, so the Jews were wont to wash their hands in this manner, as Dr. Pocock has proved from Jewish writers: which is also confirmed by what we read, 2 Kings iii. 11. "That Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah," as servants were wont to do, when their masters washed their hands. We see then that the customary washing among the Jews, which is here expressly called a baptism, implied no more than pouring water on a small part of the body: And therefore that the word does not necessarily import a dipping of the whole body, or even of any part.

Again, in Heb. ix. 10. the apostle speaks of the Jewish ritual as standing in Divers Washings; the Greek is, different Baptisms. And it appears that purifications by sprinkling are especially intended. For he adds, with a plain reference to, and as an illustration of what he had just said: "If the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer, Sprinkling the unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ," &c. which shews that these purifications by sprinkling are instances of those washings or baptisms he had mentioned, and indeed some of the chief instances: otherwise it would not have been pertinent to his purpose to have noticed them on this occasion. A plain proof that sprinkling is a true baptism.

Further, The apostle says of the Israelites who came out of Egypt that "they were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," 1 Cor. x. 2. How were they baptized? Certainly they were not dipped. For they went on dry ground through the sea, which stood as a wall on each hand. It was the Egyptians only that were baptized by immersion. According to the account Moses gives, the Israelites could no otherwise be baptized in the cloud

cloud and sea, than by being sprinkled with rain from the one, and a spray from the other, as they passed along: to which Psal. lxxviii. 7, 8, 9, is thought to refer. Here is then another instance of baptism by sprinkling; which was a token of the separation or sanctification of the people to God. This gives a natural and easy account of the matter. But how unnatural and strained is our opponent's way of explaining it: "That the people having the sea " on each hand, and the cloud over their heads, seemed to be as " it were dipped or enclosed in water." On which I would observe, that the apostle says not that they seemed to be as it were baptized, but in plain terms that they were Baptized. But whatever resemblances of dipping people may imagine, immersion without wetting is certainly no real Baptism. For whether the mode of washing be essential or not, yet the washing or wetting itself is indeed essential to a true and proper baptism. When the word ever signifies immersion, yet it is such an immersion as includes and necessarily infers washing or wetting being in order to; or for the sake of tinging, or ablution, as is commonly observed by the critics. If people may be baptized by having the water round them, though they are not wet by it at all, the dry hold of a ship upon the water would serve as well as Jordan: And by going down into it; we shall be dipped in the sea in like manner as the Israelites were -- What is further said of the representation of a burial and resurrection in their going down into, and coming up out of the sea, is quite impertinent. The apostle says nothing of their being buried in the sea. It was their enemies only that were buried; and sunk as lead in the mighty waters. -- In short -- The fathers were baptized in the cloud and sea -- A true baptism necessarily implies wetting. They were not wet by immersion -- they could not therefore be baptized by immersion -- whatever washing they received could be only by sprinkling -- It was therefore in this mode undoubtedly that they were baptized. Which is another proof that sprinkling is a mode of baptism.

Let us now consider the words of Christ. Luk. xii. 50. "I " have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitned till " it be accomplished." Christ here calls his sufferings a baptism. But it seems to me that commentators have missed the true interpretations of these words. They suppose the baptism here spoken of is to be taken in a metaphorical, and not a literal sense. Hence some have argued in favour of the mode of dipping as most fitly expressive of the sufferings of Christ, who was plunged and sunk in anguish and distress. Others argue as well and fairly in favour of the mode of affusion, as expressive of the pouring out the curse of God, and the vials of his wrath due to our sins upon Christ the atoning sacrifice. Thus people explain the supposed metaphor, according to their different views. But, methinks, the plain literal sense is more apt and natural, than either of these far fetched interpretations. The sacred body of
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the blessed Jesus was truly and literally baptized---He was wet and bathed in his own tears, and sweat, and blood, in his agony in the garden, and when he was scourged, and nailed to the cross. He was baptized and sanctified by the blood of the covenant, Heb. x. 29. that is, by his own blood; even as the Jewish high priests were baptized, sanctified, and consecrated with water and the blood of beasts, as types of Christ. And accordingly it was a common expression of the ancient fathers, concerning the martyrs, who had shed their blood in bearing witness to the Christian faith, that they were baptized with their own blood.---Here is then, I think, another very good proof, that dipping is no ways essential to baptism.---For, Christ was not dipped, and his martyrs are not dipped in their bloody baptism; but he was wet, and tinged, and bathed in his sweat, and blood issuing from his pores and veins.

Let us now make some remarks on the baptism with the Holy Ghost, which is often spoken of. This is indeed a figurative baptism, by which the subjects of it were sanctified, consecrated and separated to God, in a higher and more eminent sense, than those were who had only been consecrated by water baptism. But how is this spiritual baptism explained? There are several expressions which are plainly of the same import: such as the "pouring out of the spirit" upon the subject. When the Apostles were baptized with the Holy Ghost, according to Christ's promise, Acts i. 5. Peter observes, that this was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, "It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit." Acts ii. 17. and again ver. 33. "That Christ being " by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the " Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed or poured " forth those things which ye now see and hear*." Here we see " that pouring upon," and baptizing are synonymous expressions. The one explains the other. Now if the pouring out of the spirit be the baptism of the spirit, the pouring of water must also be a baptism of water.---It is to be well observed, that as the Holy Spirit is in scripture often signified by water, as a fit emblem of his sanctifying and comforting influences; so the conferring of the spirit upon us, which is undoubtedly the true intendment of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, is not represented by the similitude of dipping into water, but as a pouring or sprinkling of water upon us.---Isa. xlv. 3. "I will pour waters on the thirsty, and floods " on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, and my " blessing on thine offspring." See also, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. "I " will

* This entirely overthrows that strange conceit advanced by Dr. Gill, That the baptism of the Apostles with the Holy Ghost, means their being dipped into the Holy Ghost, which filled the house where they were met. But Peter says, It was by a pouring out, or shedding forth of the Spirit upon them, that they were then baptized.

" will sprinkle clean water on you, and ye shall be clean. A new heart will I give you," &c. All which I think proves plainly, that sprinkling is in scripture considered as a mode of baptism.--- I will add one remark more. The baptism with the Holy Ghost is termed, an unction or anointing, 1 John ii. 26, 27. The holy oil, with which persons were anointed in their consecration, was a sign or emblem of the Holy Spirit given to them, to fit them for the offices to which they were called. The same is also signified by Christian baptism. Now, it is by pouring on of oil that persons are anointed; and it is by pouring out of the Spirit upon us, that our anointing or baptism with the Holy Ghost is expressed. As therefore baptism answers in signification to anointing, we may well conclude, that it may properly be administered in the same way, that is by affusion. Can we doubt whether affusion be a true baptism, when we find that in scripture, Baptizing, Pouring, Sprinkling, and Anointing, are parallel, and signify the same thing?

The word baptize occurs but once that I remember in the Greek version of the old testament, 2 Kings v. 14. Our last English translation renders the place, "He dipped himself in Jordan." But there is nothing in the account that determines in what manner this washing was performed. In the older English bible the place is rendered "He washed himself in Jordan," which divers learned men have preferred, and which was what the Prophet directed to ver. 10. without prescribing the mode. But it is worthy of particular remark, that the word *Bapto* whence baptize is derived, and which is of like signification, this word is used by the Greek translators to express the wetting of Nebuchadnezzar's body with the dew of heaven; which could not mean a dipping, but a sprinkling.---Indeed wetting seems to be the genuine signification which this word constantly bears throughout the old and new testament.

One remark more I will add. In all the different translations of the new testament that I have seen, I have not found that the word *Baptizo* in the original is ever rendered by a word signifying or implying immersion. But they either retain the original word, or render it washing or ablution: which we cannot think they would have done, if the authors had not been satisfied that this is the true scriptural sense, however the word is used in heathen writers.

And we find accordingly, that the ancient fathers did often use the word Baptism to express a wetting when there was no dipping. They speak of the baptism of Clinicks and others, as administered by sprinkling, and allow it to be a valid baptism.---The Latins too did commonly term a baptized person *Tinctus*, wet or tinged, a word which no more implies dipping than affusion. They speak of the martyrs as baptized with their own blood -- which could not mean immersion, as has been noted. And finally, they speak of penitents as baptized with the baptism

tism of tears, which certainly could not intend their being dipped in them, but only wet with weeping---These things are a sufficient proof that these ancient writers understood the word in that large and general sense, which I have shewn is the scriptural sense---And upon the whole, to imagine that dipping only is baptism, is a groundless and mistaken notion. And is confuted by the greatest and most unexceptionable authorities and by incontestible instances from the scriptures and the ancient christian writers.

To find and ascertain the signification of the word, will, I think, determine the dispute concerning the mode of Baptism. For which reason, I have examined the matter the more carefully. And the conclusion in which this enquiry has issued, will not be at all weakened, but rather much confirmed by the account we have in the scriptures of the administration of this ordinance. And this leads us to consider,

Secondly, Whether the necessity of dipping can be argued from these scriptural precedents. Some suppose, that "John Baptist and the apostles baptized by immersion only: And" that we are bound herein strictly to follow their example." On the contrary, we can find no certainty that immersion was ever practised in the apostolic age. It is morally certain that this was not the constant mode of administration. And whether it was practised or not, there is no reason for insisting that this mode is either necessary or most expedient---to be constantly observed by us.

As I am far from calling in question the lawfulness of baptizing by immersion, I would not be understood in asserting, or undertaking to prove, that the apostles did not baptize in this manner, in some instances. But this may truly be said, that it does not certainly appear whether they did or not. That baptism was in any one instance administered by dipping, the scripture saith not; nor can it certainly be gathered from the accounts we have given us. And if some circumstances that are related may seem to favour the probability that immersion might sometimes be practised, they are perhaps at least fully balanced by probable arguments to the contrary. The matter is indeed of so very little importance, that it would not be worth while to spend time in examining the instances alledged, did not some lay great stress upon them. 'Tis true, we read that Jesus was baptized by John in Jordan; and then came up out of the water. Mark. i. 9, 10. "That the Jews were also baptized of John in Jordan." Mat. iii. 6. "That John baptized in Enon, because there was much water." John iii. 23. "That the Eunuch went down into the water with Phillip, and when he was baptized they came up out of the water." Acts viii. 38, 39. But whether any of these were dipped is uncertain. It is not even certain whether any of these instances went into and were baptized, in

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in the water; though the texts are so rendered in our English bible. But the Greek, which is the authentic standard will fairly admit of this sense, as critics have often observed, viz. That they went down to, were baptized at, and went up from the water*. But waving this remark, supposing they did go into the water, and were there baptized; it does not follow that they were plunged. It is nothing strange or improbable if they stepped into the water, that they might be baptized by affusion. Though there was much water, or many waters, (as the phrase properly signifies) at Enon, where John was baptizing. This is no proof that he dipped, or made use of much water in baptism, or that there was even a convenient depth of water for such a purpose. Travellers have reported that there are only springs and small rivulets to be found in this place. As multitudes resorted to John, a place that was well supplied with water, for their use and refreshment would be most convenient, suppose none of them were dipped, as I find no certainty that they were. And if any should think that the administration of baptism at rivers, and in places where there was plenty of water, is a circumstance that favours immersion, though it is needless to contest this point, yet we might easily mention several things as probable arguments that immersion was not practised in these instances. It seems unlikely that mixed multitudes of both sexes should be dipped naked. And it was contrary to the Jewish custom to bathe with any of their clothes on; in which respect they were so strict, that they held a person to be unclean, if but the top of one of his fingers were covered, when he bathed himself for his cleansing. Or if immersion were received with the clothes on, this would require a shifting of apparel, which we have no hint of. Nor can we easily conceive how strangers, who came from home without any design of being baptized, as was the case with some, should be furnished with necessary change of raiment for this purpose.

* The Greek text does not determine whether Jesus and the Jews were baptized in Jordan or only at Jordan for the particles (en and eis) here used, signifying, in, at, or to. See Rom. viii. 34, (en). At the right hand of God, Nor is it certain that the Eunuch went into the water. The particle (eis) is often rendered, to. John xx. 4. The other disciple came first (eis) to the sepulchre, yet went he not in. Phillip and the Eunuch went up (ek) from the water: So the particle is elsewhere rendered. See Mat. xiii. 42. The queen of the south came (ek) from the uttermost ends of the earth. Jesus when he was baptized went up (apo) from the water; as the phrase most properly signifies. I do not mention these things as faulting our English translation. All that I aim at is, that the original may fairly be rendered either way: and that this circumstance, as it is immaterial, so it is left undetermined.

purpose. Or how John should be able, without a miracle, to bear the hardship of standing in the water up to his waist a great part of his time, to dip the multitudes that came to him. These circumstances must surely weaken, if not overbalance, all probabilities or presumptions that can be pleaded in favour of immersion, in these instances.

But be this as it may, we may be morally certain, that immersion was not only constantly practised by the apostles in the administration of baptism. We have accounts of several instances, so circumstanced, that the supposition of their being dipped is most incredible. Particularly the 3000 baptized on the day of Pentecost. For it was at least nine o'clock when Peter began his sermon. After this he had a long conference, and with many words counselled, testified, and exhorted them. Then the apostles had to receive a confession of faith from each of them distinctly; and then baptize them severally: Which, though done in the quickest manner, would require the whole remainder of the day. But in the slower way of immersion, we cannot conceive how it could be done by the apostles without a miracle. Nor may we suppose that the apostles were assisted in this work by the seventy disciples, who appear not to have been authorized to administer the ordinances. Besides, how incredible is it, that they should on a sudden find conveniences for dipping so many, in the midst of a city, among zealous opposers; or that so many strangers should either be baptized naked, or have change of raiment. We cannot rationally think, that they could be baptized otherwise than by affusion. Nor is it probable that Paul was baptized by immersion: For, upon Ananias coming in to him, putting his hands upon him, &c. we read, that he immediately received his sight, arose and was baptized; that is, in the house where he was: there being no hint of his going out to any water, weak as he was with long fasting and agitation of mind*. It is not probable that those were dipped who were baptized at the house of Cornelius, Acts x. 47. Peter seeing them filled with the Holy Ghost, said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized." The natural sense is, Can any forbid water to be brought or provided to baptize these: not, whether any could forbid their going to the water. And, in the account of their baptism, there is no hint of their going from the house. It is highly improbable, that the jailor and his house were baptized by immersion; for, this was done in the night, and in the prison, where there was no river

* Acts ix. 17, 18. Note, Paul was baptized without a profession of faith, upon Christ's testimony concerning him, that he was a chosen vessel. The testimony of Christ, that the infants of believers are of the kingdom of heaven, are holy, are interested in the promise, is as good a warrant for baptizing them without a profession of their faith.

river or pool to be imagined. Can it be thought, that the jailor, with his whole family, and his prisoners, whom he was charged to keep at his peril, should at such an hour, grope away in the dark, or go with a lanthorn or torch to a river or pool, no one knows where, and that through a city, just waked up with a great earthquake, and the streets, it is probable, filled with the frightened citizens? They might all well expect to be taken up and punished for helping the prisoners to make their escape. Nor is it credible that the apostles would have done such a thing; who would not leave the prison till the magistrates took them out. The administration of baptism would, doubtless, have been deferred, if it could not then have been attended without all this difficulty and danger. Besides, there is no account of their going out to the water, or leaving the prison. The house of the jailor, into which he brought the apostles, seems to have been a separate apartment of the building, where the keeper dwelt, that he might conveniently attend his charge. And we may here make this general remark; that among all the instances of baptism mentioned in the New Testament, it is never said or intimated, that they went from the place where they happened to be, to any river or stream, that they might be baptized in or at it. But all who are said to have been baptized in any stream were by it, when they first offered themselves to baptism.

Upon the whole, we have much more evidence that dipping was not constantly practised by the apostles, in the administration of baptism, than we have that it was practised by them at all. But, if after all, it should seem to any, that this was the mode in which the apostles commonly administered the ordinance, it would be no proof that they disapproved the mode of sprinkling; any more than the common practice of sprinkling among us is an argument that we disallow of dipping. The apostles might have good reasons, in compliance with the customs or inclinations of the first converts, to administer baptism in such a mode as is neither necessary nor most expedient for us. But whether they did or not, the mode is a circumstance in which we are left at liberty. For, it is not any particular Manner of baptizing that is enjoined upon us, but it is Baptism itself, in whatever way we find most convenient. And that sprinkling is a true and proper baptism, in the scriptural sense of the word, has been shewn before. Again,

Thirdly, The necessity of immersion is argued from the apostle's words, Rom. vi. 4. "We are buried with Christ in baptism." Which words have been supposed to refer to this mode of burying the subject in water. But it does not appear that any such reference or allusion is here intended. The apostle is here shewing, that "Christians may not live any longer in sin, inasmuch as they are dead to it." To prove and illustrate this, he reminds us of our being "baptized into Christ." By baptism, we are not only dedicated to Christ, and brought into a special relation to him

him as his disciples ; but, our baptism is the outward sign of our ingrafting into Christ, and so of our spiritual union to him, and communion with him, in the benefits obtained for the members of his body, by his crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection ; and also of our obligation to a spiritual conformity to his crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection, as is noted and illustrated in what follows. Being thus " baptized into Christ, we are baptized in-
 " to his death." We not only participate of the benefits obtained by his death, but are bound to a spiritual conformity to him in his crucifixion and death ; by the crucifixion and death of our old man, with its affections and lusts. " Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death." Baptism signifies our union and communion with Christ ; and our profession and obligation to a conformity to him, " in his burial," as well as his crucifixion, and death. The old man, with his deeds, must be put off, utterly rejected and buried. We must, in respect of our former lusts and conversation, be as if we were " dead and buried." We, in our baptism, profess and are obliged to have done with these things ; to endeavour, that the body of sin may be quite mortified and destroyed. But this work of mortification, in which " we are made conformable to Christ's death," is in order to a spiritual resurrection ; in conformity to the example, and by the quickening virtue of Christ's resurrection : " That like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life." So that according to the apostle, baptism imports our union and conformity to Christ in his crucifixion, death and resurrection, as well as in his burial. And why baptism should be supposed to bear an outward resemblance of his burial, rather than of his crucifixion and death, or why any should fancy an allusion to the mode of immersion, I can see no reason.

I might further observe, that dipping a person in water does not resemble the burial of Christ, who was not laid in a common grave, but in a tomb hewn out of the side of a rock, into which they entered by a door. Nor does it resemble a common burial, which is not so properly the letting down the body into the grave, as the casting in the earth upon it ; of which the sprinkling or pouring of water on a person is no unfit representation ; but dipping bears no resemblance to it. It has also been noted, that it was anciently a common practice at funerals to pour ointment on the dead body, of which the pouring of water in baptism is a good resemblance ; but there is nothing like it in dipping. However, I lay but little stress upon these things. The truth is, baptism does not appear to have been designed for a representation of Christ's burial and resurrection. It is the application of the benefits of redemption to Christians, that is mainly signified in this sacrament. And it is not an outward, but a spiritual conformity to Christ's death and burial that is intended by our being buried with him in baptism.

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But, admitting that the mode of immersion may here be alluded to, nothing more could be fairly argued from it, than that immersion is a lawful way of baptizing, and was not unknown and unpractised in the apostolic age. But, does this prove any thing against the lawfulness of sprinkling? Does an allusion to the one mode imply a disapprobation of the other? If probable allusions are sufficient evidence in the case, this argument may be improved in favour of sprinkling with equal advantage. See Heb. x. 22, 23. "Having our hearts sprinkled," that is, baptized or purified spiritually, "from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water," that is, baptized externally, "let us hold fast the profession of our faith," sealed in our baptism. Matth. iii. 11. "I baptize you with water," or pour water upon you, "but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost," or pour the Spirit upon you. Tit. iii. 5. "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed or poured upon us." By the washing of regeneration, many understand baptism, the gospel sacrament of regeneration; others understand the grace of regeneration, of which baptism is the instituted sacramental sign. It is, however, called a washing, in allusion to the rite of baptism; and therein the Spirit is said to be shed or poured forth, in allusion to the affusion of water in the administration of baptism. The allusion to the mode of sprinkling or affusion, is, I think, at least as probable in these texts, as the allusion to dipping is in any texts that can be found. The conclusion then must be, that both ways of baptizing are lawful, and were practised by the apostles, and this we freely agree to. If our opponents will do the same, the dispute is at an end.

Let us now enquire, fourthly, Whether dipping answers to and represents the thing signified in Baptism better than sprinkling. It has just been observed, that Baptism is the outward sign and token of the application of the benefits of redemption to believers, their justification, and sanctification. "Christ washes us from our sins in his own blood." And Baptism, as the outward sign of the application of Christ's blood, is, "for the washing away of sins." But how is the application of Christ's blood for our cleansing represented? It is called, "the blood of sprinkling." And the apostle speaks of the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." But we are never said to be cleansed from sin by being dipped into the blood of Christ.---Again, Baptism is the instituted sign of our having the gift of the Holy Ghost bestowed upon us. "Be baptized," says Peter, "and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Now, the donation of the Holy Ghost is never expressed by our being dipped into the Holy Ghost; but by being poured out, and our being sprinkled thereby; which is called our being baptized with the Spirit. Sprinkling is therefore a more apt representation of the application of the blood of Christ,

Christ, and the influences of the Spirit, for the cleansing of our souls from sin. The argument, therefore, from the analogy of the sign with the thing signified, is plainly in favour of sprinkling, rather than dipping. It is true, our spiritual conformity to Christ in his death and resurrection is not unfitly signified by immersion. But sprinkling more aptly represents the application of the benefits of redemption to us; which is the main thing signified by baptism.

Fifthly, We will now consider, whether any thing can be argued in favour of the necessity of immersion, from the practice of the ancient church, who it is said, generally baptized in this way. As to the apostolic age, we have no express account in what mode baptism was then administered; but it is morally certain, as has been shewn, that immersion was not the constant practice. And though it appears that this mode afterwards became very customary, and was generally preferred; yet it was never held to be necessary. Sprinkling was used all along upon occasion: as in case of sickness, and when dipping was inconvenient*. We have plainly then the judgment and practice of the primitive church on our side, that sprinkling is a true and valid baptism; and that dipping is not essential. We do not indeed think ourselves bound to follow the judgment and practice of the ancients in preferring and generally practising immersion, for which we find no good reason. Nor have our opponents any reason to blame us for this; since they too have taken the liberty to depart very far from the practice and custom of the ancients. They knew nothing of the modern custom of dipping people in their clothes. They held it as necessary that the persons be stript naked; as that they should be dipped. And they thought there was an important significancy in this rite, importing the "putting off the old man with his deeds." After baptism, the person

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* The baptism of Clinicks, which was administered in the primitive church by Sprinkling has been before mentioned. Tertullian too refers to this mode of baptism, when he says, Speaking to an impenitent person, "who will afford thee one sprinkling of water (*asperginem unam cujuslibet aquæ*) for baptism." And of Laurence the martyr, contemporary with Cyprian, we are told, that he baptized a Roman soldier with a pitcher of water. And also, that he baptized one Lucillus pouring water on his head. Athanasius too, speaking of those who were baptized by Heretics, says, "They who are sprinkled by them are further defiled by a corrupt religion, than redeemed." 3d. Oration against the Arians. To this it may be added, (what I have somewhere read) that the ancients when they had dipped a person were wont to apply water to his face. From all which, and much more that might be produced, it appears that the mode of sprinkling was practised, and allowed in the primitive church.

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was clothed with white garments, signifying the "putting on Christ, or the new man." And some have supposed that the apostle in these expressions alludes to this custom of stripping and clothing in the administration of baptism: A supposition of like probability, I conceive, as that our being "buried with Christ in baptism," alludes to dipping. Many other significant rites they had; such as trine immersion, exorcism, breathing on the person, anointing him with oil, &c. These rites and ceremonies, though generally observed by the ancients, our opponents reject. And we have as good a right to ute our liberty, as to the mode of baptism, whatever the ancient custom might be.

But it may be said, "that these rites are improper, and favour of superstition, which cannot be said of immersion." I answer, though I believe that immersion may be administered, and received without superstition; yet a preferring of immersion to sprinkling, as being a more valid, efficacious or perfect baptism, does, I think, really favour of superstition. And as it is certain that superstitious opinions and practices were early received in the church, particularly with respect to baptism; so it seems to have been owing to superstition that dipping was originally preferred to sprinkling. Religious purifications, by washing with water, were common among both Jews and Gentiles. In these it was customary, as we are informed, that the person be stripped naked, and his whole body bathed. Now it seems very probable, that many converts to christianity, not altogether clear of those superstitious conceits, which they had imbibed from Judaism and Gentilism, might imagine, that there was some natural virtue in the christian baptism, like what they had been wont to conceive was in the lustrations they had formerly practised: and that its purifying efficacy would be greater if they were dipped, than if they were only sprinkled, greater if they were baptized naked, than in their clothes. The better instructed christians might think it best to condescend to their prejudices, and bear the infirmities of the weak, in order to gain them over to the christian faith, and profession: And so by degrees that mode of baptism, which most resembled these lustrations, came to be generally practised; and a superstitious notion of its greater fitness and efficacy unto the proper ends of baptism was bred in the minds of many. Jewish and heathenish rites were adoped, and a christian significancy put upon them. The custom of receiving baptism naked, we all agree, was not of divine institution. It seems plainly to have sprung from Jewish and Gentile superstition. And from the same source it was, as we may well suppose, that dipping came to be so much practised in the ancient church: for we find that stripping and dipping constantly went together, and the one was thought as necessary as the other.

This seems to be the most probable account, why immersion was so much practised in the third and following certuries; for

till then, I find not whether baptism was generally administered in this mode. But however this may be, the ancient fathers agreed with us that sprinkling was a true and valid baptism; and that immersion was not essential. Let this be granted, and superstition avoided, and we plead for no more.



THE SECOND PART.

On the SUBJECTS of BAPTISM.

SECTION I.

THE second part of the argument in hand, was to consider who are the proper subjects of baptism, or to whom this ordinance is to be administered. It is to be observed that a person may be considered as being a proper subject of baptism in two respects; that is, either really, and in the sight of God, or visibly, and in the account of the church, judging according to the rules of the gospel. No one ought to offer himself to baptism, while he is really and in the sight of God unmeet for it. But the church are to admit all those who according to the rules of the gospel, appear to them to be proper subjects, whether they are indeed such as they appear to be or not. It is none of our concern to search the hearts of men. The tree is to be judged of by the fruits which are visible. If hypocrites feign themselves to be believers and saints, and nothing appears to the church but that they may be sincere in their profession, they are to be received as believers. Thus Ananias, Sapphira, Simon Magus, and many others, were received into the church; notwithstanding their hearts were not right before God. We have no reason to perplex ourselves with surmises, that the church is defiled by having close hypocrites in its bosom. If none are admitted, or suffered to remain in its communion, unless they be such as by rule of the gospel are visible saints, we shall never be blamed by Christ. This rule, duly observed, will keep the church as pure as Christ designed it should be in this world.

Our present enquiry, concerning the subjects of baptism, is not so much, Who are really such in the sight of God? but, Who they are that, according to the gospel rule, are to be admitted by the church? In answer to which, we say, that all who make a credible

visible profession of faith, are proper subjects, together with their infants, or children in minority. It is agreed, that professed believers are subjects of baptism: And that this ordinance is not to be administered to one of adult age, unless he has in some manner made a credible profession of faith. But that the infants of members of the visible church are to be received as members also, and as the proper subjects of baptism, has been denied by some; and the administering the ordinance to such infants, has been censured as irregular, unwarrantable, of no validity or advantage.

I shall therefore endeavour to prove and vindicate the "divine right of infant baptism," as briefly and plainly as I can; leaving out those collateral questions, which have often been discussed by those who have undertaken to treat this subject at large. By means of these the lines of defence have been so enlarged, and the argument has become so complicated that many are lost in it, not being able to comprehend it, and carry it in mind.

In pursuance of this design, I shall, first, represent the chief and plainest reason, upon which I believe infant baptism to be a divine ordinance.--- Then I will consider the principal objections that are made to it---after which I may add some brief reflections and remarks on the whole.

But before I enter on the proof of the point before us, let it be observed and remembered---That there is nothing positive in the New Testament against infant baptism. It is no where said or hinted, that the Apostles forbid or refused, or declined to baptize infants; or that any child of a believer was, after he was grown up, baptized upon a profession of faith. It must also be acknowledged, that infants are capable not only of the outward sign of baptism, but also of having an interest in the blessings and Grace of the New Covenant, and coming under its bonds, which is the thing signified in the ordinance, and that they need those New Covenant blessings. Further, It is no where declared in scripture, either in express, or equivalent terms, that "adult persons only," or that "none but those who believe" or profess faith, are to be baptized. In short, there is absolutely and perfectly nothing that stands in the way of our embracing, the doctrine of infant baptism, if we can find any kind of evidence in favour of it, either express or consequential.--- This then is what we have now to enquire into viz. Whether any such evidence appears? And I think enough may be collected from the scriptures to put the matter beyond all reasonable doubt.

And my first argument is taken from the church membership of infants. All those who are to be received as members of the visible church are the subjects of baptism.--- But the infants of the members of the visible church, are to be received as members of the visible church. They are therefore subjects of Baptism.

First. I say that all who are to be received as members of the visible church are the subjects of baptism. This is granted by

our opponents, particularly by Dr. Gill most expressly. "Let it be proved," says he "that infants are or ought to be members of Gospel churches--and we shall readily admit them," i. e. to baptism.--Answer to Dickinson. p. 89.

Some have pretended "that it is inconsistent to say, that a right to baptism is grounded upon church membership, and yet that we are admitted into the church by baptism." But this is a mere cavil. The right of church membership is one thing; and admission into the visible church is another. They who are qualified for admission into the church, according to the rule of the gospel, are members by right, before they are members by admission. And they are accordingly to be received as rightful members by baptism, and so admitted in an orderly way to those subsequent privileges of christian communion, to which baptism is a regular and solemn introduction. For the right of church membership, though it gives an immediate claim to admission into the church by baptism, yet it does not give an immediate and orderly claim to any, while unbaptized, to all the privileges of admitted and baptized members. The instituted order of Christ's house is not to be neglected.--If any one should come, and ask for admission into a family as a servant, and produce the appointed token from the master, that he has taken him into his service; such a one is to be looked upon as belonging to the family, and is accordingly to be admitted. But if the orders of the house require that he first put on the badge, and livery of a servant, before he come to the table, then this order must be observed. He has a right, as belonging to the family, to sit at the table; but he ought to come according to order. The case is plain enough, if men would not make difficulties where there are none. But be this as it will, whether the right of church membership be antecedent to baptism, or baptism be antecedent to church membership, it cannot be denied that all those are the proper subjects of baptism, who are, or ought to be admitted as members of the gospel church.

Now if it can be made to appear, that the infants of church members are, or ought to be acknowledged and admitted as members of the visible church, we must unavoidably conclude that they are subjects of baptism. And this is what I undertake to prove. And there is a remarkable passage recorded by three of the Evangelists which seems to be sufficient to determine the point. I will recite it at large, collecting all the particulars mentioned in the several accounts. Mat. xix. 13--15. Mark x. 13, 16. Luke xviii. 15, 16.--"And they brought unto him little children, infants, that he should touch them, put his hands on them, and pray: And his Disciples rebuked them, i. e. those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and called them to him, and said unto them, suffer the little children to come to me, and forbid them not, for of
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"soever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child,
"he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms,
"put or laid his hands upon them, and blessed them."

These were young "infant" children which were brought to Christ, whom he took up in his arms, as we are expressly told. They who brought them gave evidence of their faith in him: for they brought them that he might put his hands on them and pray.--They were members of the church and kingdom of God themselves, from which they had not cut themselves off by manifest unbelief--Whether these children were their own (as is most probable) we need not take upon us to determine. They were without doubt children of the covenant. We may also, observe, that it was agreeable to the mind of Christ that they should be brought to him; for when the disciples rebuked those that brought them, Jesus seeing it, was much displeased. The disposition they manifested on this occasion to despise little ones, and set themselves above them, as if young children were not fit to be introduced into their company, Christ did much dislike. And he was also displeased, as it seems, to find that they were so dull of understanding, and so much mistaken in their apprehensions. They might reasonably have concluded, that as little children always had been received as members of the church of God, as Christ had not intimated any design to cut them off from this their right, as they needed his blessing, and were capable of it; on these grounds they ought to have concluded, that it was fit and proper that they should be presented to the Messiah, the King of Israel, as his disciples and subjects, that they might receive his blessing--But the disciples seem to have reasoned in a quite different manner, as some others have done since. "To what purpose is it to bring these little children hither? They are not capable of being taught. They do not understand what is intended to be done with them. It will be of no advantage to them. We cannot look upon them to be believers, or fit to belong to our society." Such thoughts as these they seem to have had. For our Saviour's words on this occasion are as plain and pointed as possible against this error--Their mistake at this time gave our Lord a fit occasion to declare his mind fully and expressly upon the case of infants; that they are of the kingdom of heaven; and therefore none should forbid, or discourage any from bringing and presenting them to him. "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

From these words it appears, in the first place, that those infants which were brought to Christ, and other infants who like these, were the children of the covenant, belong to the church of God: for this is what we are here to understand by the kingdom of heaven, as I shall shew presently. Such as these properly and naturally

naturally signifies, persons of this sort or class, and that come under this denomination--Such children as these, and the children that were brought to Christ were certainly such: They were included among that sort of persons; even as the woman taken in adultery was one of those condemned by that law, "which commanded that such should be stoned."

Some would fain have the meaning of this expression to be, "that those who resemble little children in humility belong to the kingdom of heaven." But how strained and unnatural is this? Christians are to resemble lambs and doves for meekness, as well as infants. But what should we think of a man that should say to his servant: "Suffer the sheep and lambs to come to me, and hinder them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."--Would not this be highly improper, and worse than ridiculous. And yet this would be just as proper as the words of Christ are, according to the meaning that these would force upon them--The reason Christ gives why the little children should be brought to him, is, because of such is the kingdom of God.---And a very plain and pertinent reason it is, as we understand it. For if children belong to the kingdom of Christ, we can see a manifest fitness that they should be presented to him as his subjects and people, that he might own them, and give them his blessing. But what weight or pertinency is there in such a reason as our adversaries would assign for bringing these children to Christ? "Suffer little children to come to me, for though it is true they belong not to my kingdom, yet the subjects of my kingdom are somewhat like them. There is that in little children which looks like meekness and humility, and is a fit emblem of it." Must every thing then that any ways resembles true christians, be brought to Christ, for him to lay his hand upon it, and pray over it? What an uncouth, unintelligible reason is this for bringing children to Christ? Which will serve as well for a reason why lambs and doves should be brought and presented to him, as Mr. Henry well observes. Because the kingdom of God consists of grown persons, meek and harmless like children, is it a just and plain consequence, that children should be brought and presented to Christ; though they belong not to his kingdom? Surely no one has any cause to be angry with another (as Christ was with his disciples) for not apprehending weight in such a reason as this. Indeed there is no weight in it.

Again, The reception which Christ gave these children, and his actions towards them, may put it out of all doubt that he acknowledged them as the subjects of his kingdom. For he took them in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. Christ never pronounced a solemn blessing upon any but those whom he owned as the subjects of his kingdom. By laying his hands on these children and blessing them, he recognized them as his

his own people and put upon them the same token of acknowledgment which he gave his disciples immediately before his ascension. The blessing was always looked upon as a sacred thing, which belonged only to the professed worshippers and people of God; especially that solemn religious blessing in the name of God, with imposition of hands, which had been practised in the church in all ages. None were the subjects of this, upon any occasion that we read of, but they that belonged to the church. When we read that God blessed Noah, and Abraham, and the other patriarchs, we have no doubt but that hereby he owned them, in the most solemn manner, as his people. And shall any be so unreasonable as to deny or call in question the church membership of infants, after Christ himself has not only declared that of such is the kingdom of heaven, but has given this further token and testimony of the same, even laying on his hands, and pronouncing a blessing upon them? Which is as distinguishing a token of church membership as baptism itself, or any other ordinance whatever.

These infants then, and such as these must be allowed to belong to the kingdom of heaven. Christ has declared them so by words and actions as significant as possible. But, it may be enquired, What are we to understand by the kingdom of heaven? I answer, it is plainly the Church that is here meant.---It will be needless to confirm this by particular quotations; they are so many and so well known to all who have read the New Testament, with any attention. Nor is it denied by any that I know of. But as the kingdom of heaven sometimes signifies the visible church, or kingdom of grace upon earth, and sometimes the kingdom of glory in heaven; it may be enquired, whether it be the church on earth, or in heaven, that is here intended?

Now, I think it will appear, it is the Visible Church that is to be understood, if the following things are well considered. 1. Our Saviour generally uses the phrase in this sense. There are but few examples, comparatively, can be found, but such as must necessarily, or may conveniently be understood of the kingdom of grace. Thus, the kingdom of heaven, the visible church, is like a field sown with wheat and tares. It is like a net, which enclosed good fishes and bad. It is like ten virgins, five wise and five foolish. It was come to the Jews; and was within them, that is, among them; though it came not with observation. 2. It is the visible church alone, and its members, who are the proper subjects, to whom the outward ordinances, rites, and tokens of church membership are to be administered and applied. There is no gospel rule or precedent for admitting or acknowledging any as belonging to the church of God, unless there be an external and visible ground for it.

If those infants which were brought to Christ, did belong to the invisible church, and were elected into the kingdom of glory,

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yet this being a secret, could be no peculiar reason why they should be presented to Christ to receive his blessing: Nor could it be any reason why the disciples should not forbid their coming, till they knew that they were appointed to be heirs of the kingdom of glory: Nor could this be the reason why Christ was so displeased with his disciples for opposing their being brought to him, as he had never told them so, and it was impossible that they should know it otherwise. But the disciples did know that infants had always been admitted as members of the church. And Christ had never intimated any design of cutting them off. And if they still belonged visibly to the kingdom of God, they ought not to be hindered from coming to Christ, to receive his blessing. He was therefore displeased, that they should treat them as aliens, who did not belong to him, by keeping them back from coming to him. Christ's blessing these children, was an outward token that they were members of his visible church. Though Christ searched and knew the hearts of all the children of men, and who were the heirs of eternal life, yet he outwardly acknowledged and received as members of his kingdom, only such as were visibly so, according to the same rule which he has given to those who cannot judge of secret things. He never gave the outward tokens of church membership, to any as belonging to the kingdom of glory, or the invisible church; but as belonging to the kingdom of grace. But the outward tokens of church membership were given to these infants, because they belonged to the kingdom of heaven. Which, I think, fairly proves, that it is the visible church which is here intended by "the kingdom of heaven." 3. Christ declares, that these children, and such as these, were then members of the kingdom of heaven. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." But, will any say, that the kingdom of glory consists of those who are here upon earth? They were upon earth, and were in the kingdom of heaven upon earth, if they were in it at all; that is, in the kingdom of grace or visible church.

But, if it were supposed, that these words are to be understood as affirming, that these children, and such as these, belong to the invisible church, and as such, are heirs to the kingdom of glory; yet this will prove that they ought to be acknowledged and received as members of the visible church. For, can they be reasonably refused a place in the church on earth, whom Christ affirms to be heirs of heaven? If we have evidence that they belong to Christ, as his peculiar people, there needs no more to give any one a clear and undoubted right, in the account of the church, to be received as belonging to him, or as members of the church on earth. And what better evidence can there be, that any are subjects of the kingdom of heaven, than the testimony of the king himself? Is there any profession of faith that ought to have more credit in the church? Though infants are not able to speak for themselves, yet Christ has spoken for them, declaring, that

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"of such is the kingdom of heaven." And, is not the testimony of Christ a sufficient credential to warrant our receiving them? Our Lord subjoins the following memorable words, in which he strikes at the very root of his disciples error, which their conduct discovered. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, shall not enter therein." The disciples were much disposed to stand upon their distinctions. They seemed to think that they had a clearer and better title to the privileges of the Messiah's kingdom than infants. They were actual believers and followers of Christ; which could not be said of babes. If these are admitted to have a part in this kingdom, it must be considered as a special indulgence and favour to them, who have done nothing to give them any claim to such a privilege. Whereas, thought they, we have left all for the kingdom of heaven's sake. And, shall these be allowed to have as good a title as we? "Yea, says Christ, their title is as good as yours in all respects." It is, indeed, an act of mere grace and favour, that infants are admitted. They have done nothing to merit it. And, do you imagine, that any thing that you have done gives you any peculiar claim to these privileges? Do you consider the kingdom of heaven as the due reward for any doings of yours? No, be it known to you, that your title arises entirely from the free grace and gift of God, as well as theirs. If you will not receive the kingdom of God, and hold it by the same title that little children do, (viz. as the free gift of God made over to them by his covenant and promise, as his adopted children) you shall not enter therein*.

The common exception, "That these infants were not baptized by Christ, nor were brought to him for any such purpose," is altogether impertinent. We do not argue, that infants are the subjects of baptism, because we suppose that these infants were baptized by Christ; but that such infants belong to the church, is here plainly asserted; and that all such as belong to the church, are the subjects of baptism, can not be denied. It is further asked, "Why Christ did not then baptize them, if they were proper subjects?" Before men urge such questions, they should make it appear, that these infants had not been baptized before. However, whether they were baptized or not, is of no importance to us. If they were not baptized, it is not incumbent on us to give the reason. But it is incumbent on those who ask such questions, to shew. Why should it be thought necessary, that all members of the gospel church should then be baptized, before

* "Receiving the kingdom of God as a little child," is commonly explained to mean, receiving the privileges of the kingdom of heaven with humility, or a childlike temper. I think, it gives a sense more apposite to the occasion, if we understand the words as importing, that we must receive and hold the kingdom of heaven by the same right and title with children.

before baptism was fully settled as the ordinary rite of admission, which was not till after Christ's resurrection. But, if Christ did not baptize these children, yet he gave them as sure a token of church membership as baptism itself, when he laid his hands upon them and blessed them. It is further objected, "Christ's entire silence about infant baptism at this time, has no favourable aspect on such a practice." Answer. Christ having asserted the church membership of infants, and solemnly blessed them with imposition of hands, and having said nothing against the baptism of them, more than of adults, these things have a very favourable aspect on the practice of infant baptism, and imply a good warrant for it. After having thus owned them as his people, both by words and actions, if it had been his will that the sacrament of induction should not henceforth be administered to infants, as heretofore, but only to adults, he would not have failed to have given some intimation on this occasion, that notwithstanding what he had said and done, infants were not to be baptized. Christ's saying nothing against infant baptism on this occasion, when it appears so necessary to prevent mistakes, had infant baptism been contrary to his will, has no favourable aspect on the practice of those who refuse to admit them.

I have enlarged the more upon this proof of the church membership of infants, because I take it to be very decisive and unanswerable. And, I shall lay before you another passage, which will fairly lead us to the same conclusion. Mark ix. 36, 37. "Jesus took a child, and set him in the midst of them, and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them; whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me." That this was a young child, appears from Christ's taking him up in his arms, and also from his proposing him to his disciples as a pattern and emblem of humility and meekness. But, grown children, that have attained to what we commonly call the age of discretion, to act personally for themselves in matters of importance, are not wont to be held in the arms; nor are they fit emblems of humility and meekness like little children. [And if it should be said, "That these were little children that believed on Christ." I answer, The text says not so. It is true, we afterwards have an awful threatening against "those that shall offend," or lay a stumbling-block, before "one of these little ones that believe," as the words are translated. But the original may as well be rendered, "one of these little ones of believers;" or, "one of the little ones, or children, of these believers." So that we may understand, not the little ones, but their parents, to be intended by those who believe in Christ. And, if we suppose, that the character of believers is given to the little ones themselves, it will make no difficulty. For, as it cannot be denied, that young children may have the seeds of grace and faith in them, before they are capable and fit to be admitted to make a personal profession

session of it to the church; so, being members of the church or society of believers, (as has been proved, and shall further be manifested) they are, in the account and acceptance of the church, believers, according to their capacity, and may be so termed, even as we term them rational creatures, before the proper exercises of the rational faculties plainly appear. Nor can it be said, that infants cannot be offended, or made to stumble, as the word signifies. They are soon capable of being taught and led on to that which is evil, which, I suppose, is what is here mainly intended. So that I see not but that those little ones, whom Christ cautions us not to offend, or cause to stumble, may properly be understood to be little children; and then we have a further proof that such belong to the church. But, however this may be, that child which Christ held up in his arms, as an emblem and pattern of humility to his disciples, was doubtless a little one.]

Now observe, Christ says, "Whosoever shall receive one of such children," (or, "this child," as it is in Luke x. 48.) "in my name, receiveth me." To receive one in the name of Christ, is to receive him as belonging to him. So the words are clearly explained in the 41st verse of this chapter. "Whosoever shall give you to drink a cup of water in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." Since then Christ would have us receive little children in his name, as belonging to him, and declares, that in so doing we receive him; we may assuredly conclude, that they are to be reputed as belonging to him, as the members of his church. When, therefore, a believer offers his child to the church, to be received by baptism, as belonging to Christ, and admitted as a member of the same body; Shall they refuse to receive it in his name? Shall they thus despise Christ's little ones, as to shut the doors of his house upon them, and, as much as in them lies, cast them out of the inheritance of the Lord, and declare that they have no part in the Lord, and lay such a stumbling block before our children, to make them cease from fearing the Lord?" Josh. xxii. 25. God forbid! Take heed that ye despise not, and offend not one of these little ones. It were better--

We have a further evidence, that infants are the proper subjects of church membership and baptism, in that they are expressly termed disciples. It will be allowed, that all who are, or appear to be disciples, are to be admitted as church members, and subjects of baptism. Now the apostle gives infants the title of disciples, in Acts xv. 10. "Why tempt ye God to put a yoke on the necks of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." The yoke here mentioned was circumcision, with the other Jewish ordinances, which the Judaizing teachers would have imposed upon the Gentile converts, with their children. The Jews admitted none to circumcision but those

those whom they considered as proselytes or disciples of Moses. These Judaizing christians contended only for the circumcision of disciples, or proselytes to christianity. They considered the children as disciples. And the apostle accordingly reproves them for tempting God to lay a yoke upon the neck of the disciples: So all those are termed, for whom this yoke was designed by these Jewish teachers. And as this yoke was designed to be imposed on children, as well as the parents; the apostle by terming them all disciples indiscriminately and without exception, gives us to understand that the young children of believers are to be reckoned among the disciples; even as among the Jews the children of proselytes were always accounted proselytes. In short, if the Jewish teachers were for imposing upon the Gentile converts, and their children, the yoke of circumcision; and if the imposing this yoke upon the children was a tempting of God, as well as the laying it upon adults, as all will allow; then it cannot be refused, that Peter acknowledges the children to be disciples, as well as the parents. For such are all they without exception for whom this yoke was designed, which the apostle remonstrates against, as a tempting of God.

But it is objected, that "infants are not disciples, inasmuch as they have not been taught; do not deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow Christ; continue in his word; bear much fruit, &c. which are laid down in scripture as the characters of true disciples." All this is nothing but thin sophistry, and a wretched perversion of the scriptures. It never has, nor will be proved, that no person can become, nor may be admitted a disciple, till he is first taught. What is a disciple, but one who is a pupil or scholar to another, in order that he may be taught? Infants belong to the school of Christ, and are as really his disciples or scholars, before they learned one lesson, as a little child, is a disciple or scholar of its tutor as soon as ever he is admitted, before he has been taught or learned any thing. A disciple in the new testament is equivalent to a proselyte. And it is well known that among the Jews the infant children were always admitted as proselytes, together with the parents. When Christ says that a man cannot be his disciple, unless he will forsake all, take up the cross, follow him, continue in his word, bear much fruit, love one another, it is plain his words are only to be applied to adults; as appears from the context, as well as the reason of the thing. Luke xiv. 25. "He turned and said to the multitudes, If any man cometh to me, (which plainly designis an adult person) and hate not his father, &c. he cannot be my disciple." And again ver. 33. "Whosoever he be of you (adults) that forsaketh not all, &c. he cannot be my disciple." And, can any one persuade himself, or any other, that Christ's words are to be applied to infants, when he said to his disciples, John xiii. 35. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love

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"love one to another." Chap. xv. 8. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples."... And when he told the believing Jews, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." John viii. 31. But if these things are the indispensable conditions of discipleship to grown persons; will it follow that infants are not to be admitted as disciples unless these things are found in them? We might as well argue, that infants may not eat, because they do not work, since the apostle says, "He that will not work neither may he eat." Nay further, it is not necessary that any one should first practise all this self-denial, continue in the word of Christ, bear much fruit, in order to his being admitted as a disciple by baptism. The apostles baptized all that made a profession of faith immediately. They did not wait to see whether they continued in the doctrine of Christ, or bare much fruit, before they put the token of disciples upon them. Yea there were many of Christ's disciples who did not continue in his word, but went away and left him. Yet till they fell away they were called and accounted disciples. The meaning of these words of Christ is, "That his doctrine is a doctrine of self-denial; a practical institution, requiring us to bear much fruit, to continue in his word, to love one another, &c." If we cannot learn and practise these things, it is in vain for us to think of being his disciples: It will be to no good purpose to pretend to it; nor may we be allowed to continue in his school or church, but must expect to be expelled and cast out. Now, as there are many adult persons admitted as disciples, who do not answer the character of disciples indeed, so many who are admitted in infancy do afterwards approve themselves good proficients in these lessons of christianity. And we grant that these things must be learned and practised by all, according to their capacity and opportunities, in order to their answering the obligations of true disciples, whether they were admitted in infancy or afterwards.

Let us now consider more particularly the words of our text, containing the Apostolic commission. "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." It has been observed, that the words properly signify "Go make or admit all nations Disciples, baptizing them--teaching them, &c." This, our opposers do not deny. But, they say, that no one can be made a disciple but by teaching: which is true, only with respect to adults: because no "such persons" are to be admitted into the school of Christ, but by their own consent, and a previous profession of their faith in him, and obedience to him, and this necessarily pre-requires teaching. But to argue from hence, that infants are not to be admitted as disciples, because not in a present capacity of being taught, and professing their faith, is no better then begging the question, talking

talking at random, not only without proof, but contrary to what has been just proved, viz. that "Infants are in fact accounted "and termed Disciples; belong to Christ; and to the kingdom "of Heaven," all which are phrases of the same import.--- Though adults are not made Disciples, till they are first taught, and are not admitted but upon a profession of faith, yet with infants the case is otherwise. They are to be admitted upon the profession of their parents, by the order of Jesus Christ, without a personal "profession and consent," of which they are not capable. But this may be further considered afterwards.

Let us now see whether any thing can be argued from the words, in favour of infant discipleship and baptism.---When the Apostles received an order to disciple all nations, they would naturally understand, that they had it in charge to make all nations proselytes, to introduce and admit them into the church of Christ, as a school, in which they were to be taught and trained up in the knowledge, and observance of christianity, in order to the r being meet for heaven. 'Tis true neither infants nor adults are expressly named. But the Apostles were sent to disciple and baptize "the nations," which none can deny, include persons of every age. And the Apostles must needs have understood that it was their business to make Disciples of the infants, and baptize them as well as others. For, First, It would not otherwise be possible that their orders and commissions could be executed, or so much as one nation be proselyted to Christ to the end of the world, unless all the young children were removed out of it. Children, in minority, make up a great part of every nation.---If these cannot be made disciples, it will forever be an impossibility that any nation should become disciples, unless we can find a nation without children. And as all who are not the disciples of Christ belong visibly to the kingdom of Satan, the adversary will hold a large part of the world visibly under his dominion; from which he cannot be ejected.---And it would be impossible that that word should be fulfilled, "The kingdoms of the world are become the "kingdom of the Lord and his Christ." Secondly, Let it be remembered that the Apostles had been educated in the Jewish church, of which infants had all along been undoubted members. They understood that the membership of such had never been called in question, since there had been a church in the world. They knew that the infants of proselytes from among the Gentiles were constantly admitted and circumcised, together with their parents. Not only so, but such infants were baptized; as the ancient Jews report. They knew that Christ had taught them that little children belonged to the kingdom of Heaven; that he had accordingly laid his hands, and pronounced a solemn blessing upon them; and signified his will that they be received in his name, as belonging to him; and that themselves had been reproved by him for forbidding infants to be brought to receive

receive his blessing. They knew, that the admission of the children into the church, with the parents, was always reckoned a great privilege; that Christ never said or intimated that it was his will that infants should be cut off, or not admitted still as members of the gospel church. They understood that the privileges of the church were to be enlarged, and not abridged in any respect.---Now, the Apostles, whose views and apprehensions may have been such as has been represented, would, without doubt, have understood that they were instructed by their commission to admit the children with the parents, into the number of proselytes by the initiating rite, as had been the constant practice of the church.---They must have understood the matter as a minister, who had never heard that infant baptism was ever objected to, would understand his charge, if he was ordained and sent out to preach to the heathen, and gather churches among them, baptizing them. It would be unnatural, and highly unreasonable for them to understand the matter otherwise. This then must be received as the just interpretation of the commission. It is the natural and true meaning: Which is so far from cutting off infants from the gospel church, that it furnishes us with a good warrant for admitting them.

We have another unanswerable proof, that the children of believers are members of the visible church, and subjects of baptism, in 1 Cor. vii. 14. "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." The Apostle had just said, that a believer ought not to separate from an unbelieving consort, who was willing to continue in the marriage relation. And in these words he removes a doubt, which might be apt to arise in their minds, viz. Whether the children born in such a marriage were to be reckoned as belonging to the church, with the believing parents; or were to be ranked with the unbelieving parent, and so reckoned among heathens that were without?---Though infants had always been received as members of the Old Testament church, yet when the Jews had, in the time of Ezra married strange wives, which had born them children, these children were not received; but it was ordered that they be put away, together with their heathen parents, as unclean. It might therefore be a scruple, whether a believer, and member of the Christian church, were obliged or allowed to live in the state of marriage with an unbeliever; and whether their children were not to be excluded from the church, as the unclean offspring of a heathen parent; as had been determined among the Jews in the case just mentioned. This point, the apostle plainly resolves, declaring, that a believer is not defiled by having conjugal society with an unbeliever. On the contrary, says he, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife," or rather is sanctified in or to the wife, "and the unbelieving wife

is sanctified in or to the husband." That is, the believer, has a lawful and sanctified enjoyment of an unbelieving yoke-fellow. For, as the apostle elsewhere teaches us, "All things are pure" to him that is pure. And every creature of God is good, and "nothing to be refused. For, it is sanctified by the word of God" and prayer." Thus the unbelieving husband or wife is sanctified to the believer, as every creature of God is, which we may have occasion to use. Formerly, all that were out of the pale of the church were accounted unclean; and a Jew would have been defiled by living with a heathen consort. But now there is no defilement in the lawful use of any of God's creatures. They are all sanctified to a believer. Or we may take the meaning of these words thus: A believer and unbeliever being married together, are one flesh: They are one principal or source of offspring. But though an unbeliever, considered in himself personally, is unholy, and has no claim to church privileges; yet the children are intitled to these privileges, as fully and perfectly in all respects, as if both the parents were believers. For the unbelieving husband being one flesh with the believing wife, is sanctified in or by her, so far as respects the propagation of children. The husband, though an unbeliever, is, in consequence of his union in marriage with a believer, in some sort sanctified. The one flesh constituted by the marriage union is, as I may say, entirely sanctified; and not a coalescence or conjunction of unholy and holy. The unbeliever, in this relation is capable of propagating a holy seed, and transmitting church privileges to his offspring, to as good advantage as any believer.

The apostle goes on--"Else were your children unclean," as the heathen were termed and accounted. All those who were aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of the promise, and not members of the church of God, were commonly reputed uncircumcised and unclean. They were not admitted into the holy place, or to attend on holy ordinances. Now, if the unbelieving consort were not sanctified to and by the believer, as has been said, the children must have been unclean, and so not be received as members of the church, and subjects of holy ordinances.--"But now they are holy."--They have the denomination of saints, or holy ones: And are to be admitted into the visible church, into the society and fellowship of those who are visibly separated from the rest of the world, and devoted to God as his holy people. The word, Holy, as it is used in scripture, is applied to persons and things that are devoted and dedicated to God. Men are termed holy either as being separated from the rest of mankind, and standing in a peculiar relation to God, as his visible professing people; or as being conformed to the will and moral image of God in temper and practice. The one is called a relative, the other an inherent holiness. The first is attributed to all those who belong to the visible church. Thus

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the people of Israel are all spoken of as an holy people. And, upon the same account, gospel churches are considered as consisting of saints or holy persons. For, though it is not supposed that they are all really and inherently holy, or partakers of a divine nature, yet they are visibly the people of God, separated and devoted to him. But let it be particularly noted, that no person is ever styled holy from the beginning to the end of the bible, except he be of the church of God. And in the new testament, a Saint or Holy Person, a Disciple of Christ, a Member of the Church, and a subject of the Kingdom of Heaven are of the same signification. Now, since we find that the title or appellation of Holy is never given to any person in the world, except he be of the church; and since the apostle declares, that the children of believers are holy; it is a plain and undeniable consequence, that such children are of the church, and so are the proper subjects of baptism, as was to be proved.

The Antipedobaptists have endeavoured, in vain, to wring and wrest these words of the apostle to a compliance with their tenets.--- But, in the first place they would persuade us, " That the Holiness which the apostle here intends, cannot be that which is implied in, and connected with church membership.---For; they say, the same Holiness which is ascribed to the children, is also attributed to the unbelieving parent---If the children are Holy, the unbelieving husband and wife are also said to be Sanctified." But, I answer, the apostle's words plainly shew, that the unbelieving yoke-fellow is only sanctified to the believer, as all the creatures of God are said to be sanctified to the Saints, so as that they may have a holy use and enjoyment of them. Or, He is only so sanctified by becoming one flesh with a believer, that he is capable of propagating a holy seed. He is not sanctified in respect to God, but only in respect to his consort and offspring, who derive no more defilement either by conjugal cohabitation with or by natural generation from him, than if he were a believer.---In a word, the unbelieving husband is only Sanctified in that particular respect, and unto the particular purpose there pointed at, as has been said.---But the Children are declared to be not unclean, but " Holy, or saints." A title which is never given to any but those that are of the church. Unbelievers who belong not to the church may be sanctified, or prepared as instruments to answer the purposes of divine goodness to the saints. But this respective sanctification does never give them the denomination of " Holy ones, or Saints." The words of the text, and the reason of the thing therefore plainly show, that the Sanctification of the unbelieving husband or wife is a different thing from the holiness of the children.---This gives a good, pertinent and instructive sense to the apostle's words, which are taken and explained in the scriptural sense, as no doubt they ought to be. And if the holiness of the children is supposed to

signify

signify something different from the sanctification of the unbelieving parent, it need not stumble us, such variations are observable in other places; where the same word bears a somewhat different meaning in different parts of the same sentence. See John xvii. 19. "For their sakes I Sanctify myself, that they also might be Sanctified through the truth." Tit. i. 15. "Unto the pure all things are pure." Before, according to our adversaries interpretation, the words, Sanctified and Holy, bear a very different meaning; the one Signifying, "married," the other, "Legitimate."

And hence we see, there is no just foundation for that objection, "That the unbelieving parent being sanctified by a believing yoke-fellow, may as well be concluded to be a member of the church and subject of baptism, as the children whose holiness depends upon this sanctification of the parents." For a person's being sanctified in some certain respect, does not give him the denomination of a Saint, or holy one, in the language of the scriptures; which is a peculiar and appropriate title of those who belong to the church, and is never given to any others of the children of men. And, since the children are Holy, or Saints, which is not said of the unbelieving parent, though in some respect sanctified; the children are to be acknowledged as of the church, but not the unbelieving parent.

Nor is there any more reason in what is further urged, "That we may as well argue from these words of the apostle, that children of a believer, though forty or fifty years old, are to be accounted holy and received into the church, without a personal profession of faith, as that infants are to be so accounted and received; since they are all alike children, and intitled to the rights and privileges of children." For, though it is true, that the word Children does not determine their age, yet what the apostle says of them, shews, that he means only children in minority, as plainly as when he gives it in charge to fathers to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. For they are therefore accounted and filed holy and not unclean, because one of the parents at least is a believer. But this reason holds only with respect to such as are in their minority. Such children as are of age cannot be concluded to be unclean or out of the church, though both the parents are unbelievers, and unsanctified. For, adult children may act for themselves and be admitted into the church upon a personal profession of faith. And on the other hand, it cannot be concluded with any certainty, that adult children are holy, though the parents are believers. For the children may live in open infidelity. The connection between the faith and sanctification of the parents, and the holiness of the children, which the apostle asserts, holds only with respect to infants or minors; which is a clear proof that these only, and not adults are, the children here spoken of.

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Let us now consider how this passage is expounded by those on the other side. And here they would persuade us, "that the apostle means, what they call, a matrimonial holiness." And that the meaning of the text is, "The unbelieving husband is married or espoused to the wife, and the unbelieving wife, married to the husband: else were your children bastards, but now are they legitimate." I do not think it will be needful to say much to expose the unreasonableness of this interpretation. It is so strained and unnatural, it so sinks and spoils the sense, and is so utterly without foundation, that I think it may pass for one of the most improbable, unhandsome, and incredible glosses, that we shall readily meet with upon any text whatever. The notion of persons being sanctified, in any sense, by marriage has no sort of foundation in the scriptures; which never once use the words Sanctified, or Holy, to signify those who are married. And, if the Jewish Rabbies have sometimes used the Hebrew word which usually signifies a Sanctifying to express marriage; this is a modern, and not a scriptural sense, and is not to be regarded. But whatever the Hebrew word may import in the Rabbinical writings, it is only the Greek words, Hagiazō and Hagios, that we are concerned with. And it has not yet been found, that these have ever been used to denote either a marrying, or being legitimate. In short, our opponents have had the boldness to fix a meaning to the apostle's words wholly different from the sense which the words bear in any part of the scripture: A meaning unsupported by any good authority, or parallel example in any Greek writer, sacred or profane. And especially, that the word Hagios, Holy, which is predicated of the children; should signify legitimate is, for what yet appears, quite without example. Let the pretence then of Matrimonial Sanctification and Holy Legitimacy, go for an idle figment, and be exploded with just indignation and contempt *. Besides, according to this interpretation of the text, the sense will be very poor, trifling and un instructive: and the apostle's reason against a believers separating from an unbelieving consort will turn out weak and impertinent. Neither the Corinthians, nor any one else doubted, or had need to be told, that the unbelieving husband had been and was married to the wife, and the unbelieving wife to the husband. For, how could they be husband and wife, if they had not been married together?

* The only places of scripture I have ever seen brought to support this strange sense, which is invented and put on the word, Holy, are Ezra ix. 2. Mal. ii. 15. Where mention is made of the Holy Seed, and, A Godly Seed. But we have not the least reason to imagine that their legitimacy is what is intended by these epithets. They are plainly termed a Holy Seed, and a seed of God, not because they were legitimate; but because they were of the church, the visible people of God.

44 *Church Membership connected with the Covenant.*

gether? And, can any one believe in sober earnest, that the inspired apostle filled up his epistle with such a trifling ridiculous business, as telling his converts, that if they had children without being married, the children would be bastards, but now as they had been married, they were legitimate! Far be it from any christian to burlesque the sacred scriptures, at this rate---It is mere travesty---A profane infidel, who would ridicule the apostle could scarce give his words a meaner, and more ludicrous turn.

But, it may be said, "That the Corinthians doubted whether a believer were not loosed from the bond of marriage to an unbeliever, and consequently at liberty to separate." I answer, if this were the doubt, the apostle's saying, "That the unbeliever is married to the believer," was not to the purpose of determining, that a believer ought to cohabit with an unbeliever. This would be only saying, that the marriage contract is binding upon the unbelieving party; and consequently, that an unbeliever ought not to separate from a believer. But this will not prove but that the believer may be at liberty, notwithstanding, and that it may be expedient for him to forbear cohabitation with an infidel. Nor can it be said, that if one party be bound, the other cannot be at liberty. For, it is well known, that in some cases, the one party may be at liberty to repudiate the other, and yet that other party may not be at liberty till after an actual divorce. So that the apostle's reason against a separation of the marriage union between a believer and an unbeliever, according to the Antipedobaptists, will only prove that an unbeliever ought not to repudiate a believer; which every one sees, was not the point he was considering; which was, whether a believer ought to part from an unbeliever. And according to the meaning they put upon the apostle's words, his reason ought to have stood thus, in order to its having any pertinency in it: "The believing husband is bound in marriage to the unbelieving wife, and the believing wife to the unbelieving husband." Whoever was the author of this uncouth invention, it is certainly a great injury to the apostle, to imagine, that so poor a sentiment, and such left handed reasoning, could fall from his divine pen.

S E C T I O N II.

THAT the infant seed of believers are members of the church, and subjects of baptism, further appears from their interest in that gracious covenant, by which the church is constituted. To state and clear up this argument at full length, would require a large discourse. I must only give a brief sketch.

I think it is granted, that all who are visibly interested in the new covenant, are to be received as members of the visible church: and that the outward token of an interest in the cove-

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nant, and of admission into the visible church belongs to them. After the fall of man, by the breach of the first covenant, God was pleased to reveal a new and gracious covenant, of which Christ was the Mediator; which was to be the rule of intercourse and communion between God and his people, and the great charter by which the church was formed. All who were taken into this covenant were thereby separated from the rest of mankind, and brought into a peculiar relation to God, as his people and subjects, to be ruled by the special laws, and observe the special ordinances, and enjoy the special privileges of his kingdom. This kingdom of grace was to make an outward appearance upon earth, and have an outward administration in the visible church, according to the rules which God ordained. And according to these rules, all who were visibly in the covenant, were to be admitted as members of the visible church. They were to have the appointed token of the covenant put upon them, and were visible subjects of the outward ordinances and privileges of the church. For, a visible interest in the covenant, a right of membership in the visible church, a right to the token of the covenant and of church membership, and to the outward ordinances and privileges, which, according to the covenant, belong to the church; these things are inseparably connected together, and mutually infer each other. Many, it is true, who are in the covenant visibly, and in the acceptance of the church, have not a real and saving interest in new covenant blessings. They will not at last be owned by God as his peculiar people; nor is there a spiritual, effectual, and saving application of the grace of the new covenant to them. Hence arises the common distinction between the visible, and the invisible church. But the outward ordinances of the church are to be administered to all, and only those, who are visibly in the covenant, and of the church.

Now, if this covenant, by which the church is formed and constituted, includes the children with the parents, then these children belong to the church; and the token of the covenant, and of admission into the church, belongs regularly and visibly to them. This then is the point we have to prove.

Let it be remembered, in the first place, that the supposition of infants being comprehended in the covenant, and being the subjects of its outward administration in the visible church, is no ways incredible, on account of any incapacity in them. For, they are certainly capable of coming under its bonds, and having the grace of it secured and applied to them; and they greatly need new covenant blessings. It is an important privilege to them to belong to the visible church, that they may, under its watch, instructions and discipline, be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They are also capable of having the outward token of the covenant put upon them; which may afterwards be improved by them for their excitement and encouragement in the

the service of God. In short, infants are, for ought that appears, as capable subjects as any of the obligations, the privileges, and token of the covenant; and they stand in like need thereof with others. The presumption, therefore, is not at all against, but rather in favour of their being comprehended in the covenant, and in the church of God, as well as others.

We may further observe, that it has always been customary for children to be included in covenants with the parents; to come under the bonds, and receive the privileges therein stipulated. That this is common in covenants which take place among mankind is known to all; and no one imagines there is any thing unreasonable and improper in it, if the covenant be in itself good and reasonable. It is also certain, that when God has been pleased to covenant with mankind, the children as well as the parents have been comprehended. This appears to have been the case in the covenant with Adam, with Noah, with Abraham, and with the Israelites at Horeb. Indeed, this seems to have been the case in all God's federal transactions with the children of men. It is, therefore, altogether agreeable to the common sense of mankind, and the method of God's government of his people, that his covenant with them should respect and take in both them and their seed. And this consideration may, I think, render it quite credible, and somewhat probable, that the new covenant, by which the church is constituted, may be, in this respect, similar to God's covenant transactions with mankind, which, so far as appears, have constantly comprehended the children with the parents.

But, having premised these observations, I shall proceed to the direct and positive proof, that the children of God's covenant people, have also an interest in the covenant. The new covenant, which, I have said, is the great charter by which the church is formed, does most plainly and expressly take them in. It was, indeed, this new covenant I am speaking of, that was revealed to our first parents the very day that they fell, and by the proposal of it to them, they were constituted the visible church and people of God, before they were expelled from paradise.---It was again revealed to Noah after the flood, whereby he, with his children, were again recognized by God as his church and people. The same covenant was afterwards more clearly and distinctly revealed to Abraham, and the ordinance of circumcision was annexed, as an outward sign and token. And though there are sufficient intimations, that the seed of God's visible and professed people, had always, from the beginning, been considered as in the covenant, and church of God; yet as this is most expressly declared in the revelation which God made of his gracious covenant to Abraham, I shall take this more especially as the ground of the present argument.

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The Abrahamic covenant, I say, was but a plainer exhibition of that same new and gracious covenant, which had been all along the foundation and charter of the church. The addition of a new ordinance, and the grant of a particular country to him and his natural posterity, made no alteration in its substantial duties, or privileges, but only pointed out a different external administration, which was to take place in the church. Hitherto the external administration of the church seems to have been domestic; the ordinances of worship being distinctly and separately administered in the several families of the Patriarchs: nor do we read of solemn assemblies, for the purpose of attending public worship. But, as God had a design of forming a national church, of the posterity of Abraham, all the members of which were to join and have an external communion with each other in the same ordinances, and acts of worship; this different mode of administration was provided for in the grant of the land of Canaan to the posterity of Abraham; that so they might be formed into a political body, and live together, for their convenient attendance on holy ordinances. But this provision, which was made for a different external administration in the church, is no argument but that the covenant which was revealed to Abraham was, for substance, the very same with that by which the church had at first been formed, and had all along subsisted.

This may shew how unreasonably some would insinuate, that we would make several covenants of grace. As if the same covenant could not be revealed "at sundry times and in divers manners," and as if there might not be a different external administration of ordinances in the church at different times, and yet the covenant by which the church is constituted remain substantially the same.

Now, that we may distinctly state this argument, grounded on the covenant with Abraham, let us take a view of it as we have it recorded in Gen. xvii. "I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. As for me, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and Kings shall come out of thee--- And I will establish my covenant between me and thee. And thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee, the land in which thou art a stranger; all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God. Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep "between

"between me and you, and thy seed after thee: Every man
 "Child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circum-
 "cise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the
 "covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old
 "shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your ge-
 "neration; he that is born in the house, or bought with money
 "of any stranger which is not of thy seed. He that is born in
 "thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs
 "be circumcised; and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an
 "everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child
 "whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be
 "cut off from his people: he hath broken my covenant."

From this memorable passage, which I have recited at large, we see that the Abrahamic covenant comprehended the children with the parents, in their successive generations; and that the outward token of an interest in the covenant was to be applied to infants. We may further observe, that all who were included in this covenant were by it constituted a visible church, separated from the rest of the world to be the people of God. That grand article of the covenant, "I will be a God to thee and thy seed," implies, that they were to stand in a peculiar relation to God, as his church; who were to be subject to peculiar laws and ordinances, by observing which, they declared on their part, That they were his People. This promise contains also the sum of new covenant blessings. The promises and ordinances did appertain only to the church; of which all who had an interest in the covenant were members. Infants, therefore, being expressly included in the covenant, were always looked upon as of the visible church and people of God; and were to receive the distinguishing token of a covenant dedication to him.

Nor was this covenant, with its ordinances and privilege ever limited to Abraham, and his natural posterity; and particularly that article which takes the infant seed into the church with the parents, was not any peculiar privilege of the native Hebrews: nor was circumcision appointed as the token of a peculiar interest in those temporal blessings, which were granted exclusively to the natural seed of Abraham, as some would pretend. For it appears that by the express direction of God some were to have the token of the covenant and of church membership for themselves and their children, who were neither the natural descendants of Abraham, nor were with them to inherit the land of Canaan. When circumcision was first instituted, not only Abraham, with his son Ishmael, but all the males of his family were ordered to have this token of admission into the visible church. And it was a standing rule, that bought servants, and children born in the house, should be circumcised. And the old Testament church did receive profelytes from the Gentiles; and this token of their interest in the covenant of Abraham was accordingly

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accordingly administered to them and their children; who were thereupon subjects of Church ordinances, and privileges. But this their interest in the covenant of Abraham gave them no right of inheritance with the native Israelites in the land of Canaan. Which I think is a clear proof, that the covenant with Abraham, to which circumcision was annexed, was not any mere national covenant, conveying peculiar temporal privileges to him and his posterity, but it could be no other than God's new and gracious covenant; by the revelation of which, those who professedly consented to it, with their children, were constituted his visible church and people, and were the regular subjects of the ordinances appertaining to its outward administration.

The Abrahamic covenant, we see, did comprehend both parents and their infant children, constituting them members of the visible church. And not only the natural children of Abraham, but all that were afar off among the Gentiles, even as many the Lord should call, upon their becoming proselytes, professing the faith and religion of the church, they and their infant children had an interest in the covenant of Abraham, and were to be received into the visible church by the initiating rite. They were adopted into the family of Abraham, and, "the blessing of Abraham came upon the Gentiles," and he was "made the father of many nations," long before the gospel dispensation took place, and before the dissolution of the national hierarchy of the Jews, which was a middle wall of partition between them and the Gentiles. Even before this wall was taken away, there was a door left open in it, to receive all of every nation, who would join themselves to the God of Abraham, and take hold of his covenant.

The church having been constituted, according to the covenant, with Abraham, it must be allowed, that during its continuance, the children are as evidently in covenant, and of the church, and subjects of the initiating ordinance, as any others. If then it shall appear, that this covenant stands now in force, and that the gospel church is in and under it, and enjoys all its privileges without any abridgment; the church membership of infants, and their right to the token of admission, will stand upon the same firm basis, that it did under the Old Testament. But, if it shall appear, that the covenant with Abraham, is disannulled, and that the church is now constituted upon a plan entirely new; then the interest of infants in the gospel covenant, and their right of admission into the gospel church, can no otherwise be argued from the Abrahamic covenant, than by analogy, parity of reason, and such like considerations; which, however probable, are scarce conclusive.

The adversaries of infant church membership, would persuade, that this covenant, which included the infant children, was not God's new and gracious covenant with his church, but a special compact, containing a grant of mere outward and temporal pri-

vilages, long since abolished*. That stupid and ridiculous pretence, that this was a covenant of works, I pass over as unworthy of notice. Such wild, unfavourable notions must disgust all sober Christians. It is also said, "That the covenant with Abraham cannot be the covenant of grace, because it might be kept and broken by men; and included those who were not saved; was not from everlasting, but had its beginning in time; and men were in time taken into it, and put out of it, &c." I need not stay to canvass these things distinctly. However, the covenant of grace may be considered as from everlasting in the divine decree; and, however inamissible we may suppose their interest in it to be, who are vitally united to Christ; yet, as to the external revelation, application, and administration of it in the visible church, it is of no earlier date than the visible church which is formed

* Dr. Gill says, "That the covenant made with Abraham was of a mixed kind; that it had promises and mercies of a temporal nature, which belonged to his natural seed, and others of a spiritual sort, which belonged to his spiritual seed--The latter are comprized chiefly in God being a God to him and them." Answer to Dickinson. p. 48. But he denies, that this covenant, "so far as it was a covenant of grace," was made with his natural seed, as such, or with the natural seed of believing Gentiles.

Now, if it appear that this article of the covenant, which comprizes spiritual blessings, belongs to the natural posterity of Abraham, including their infants, it is then undeniable, even upon the Doctor's own concession, that they have an interest in the covenant of Abraham, "as it is a covenant of grace." But this appears from Deut. xxix. 10, --13. "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God. That he may establish thee this day to be a people to himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." We see here, that the same covenant which God had sworn to Abraham, and particularly that promise, "I will be a God to thee," which comprizes spiritual mercies, as Dr. Gill justly owns, and is, according to him, a covenant of grace. This covenant, and this promise, is renewed to them, and "their little ones in particular," are declared to be comprehended in it. The same promise is often repeated, and in the same extent. Jer. xxxi. 1. "At that time," which refers to the gospel times, when they should serve the Lord their God, and David their king, chap. xxx. 9. "saith the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people." The families, therefore, which include the infant children, were to have an interest in the covenant

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formed by it. And, it is certain, that unsanctified persons may be regularly admitted to, and cut off from an external and visible interest in the covenant, and right to ordinances. And this is that view of the covenant which comes under our present consideration, as the ground of a visible right to church privileges.

It is further objected, "That if the covenant with Abraham be not abrogated, as a part of the former administration, circumcision must still remain in force." But this consequence we deny. How can it be made to appear, that the external administration of the visible church cannot be changed, but by abolishing that gracious covenant, by which the church is formed; and so dissolving the church itself. The apostles declare plainly, that we are free from the yoke of circumcision. But that the covenant with Abraham is disannulled, or curtailed in any of the privileges it conveyed to the visible church, they never once intimate, but declare to the contrary, as we shall see presently. We do not imagine, that the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first

covenant of grace. The new covenant was promised to the house of Israel and Judah, which must doubtless comprehend the children of their families. And, the same promise is made to them, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people," ver. 31. And, those promises which peculiarly appertain to the covenant of grace, and contain a grant of spiritual blessings, are, in scripture, often made to the seed or natural posterity of God's people. See Deut. xxx. 6. Isai. xlv. 3, 4. Chap. lix. 21. And these blessings of the covenant of grace, made with Abraham, are come upon the Gentiles, or nations to whom Abraham is become a father, according to the divine promise, "That they might obtain the promise of the Spirit through faith." They are, therefore, the privilege of us and our children, as shall afterwards be shewn. And, whereas it is objected, that all who have an interest in the covenant of grace, must needs be heirs of salvation, which we cannot think is the case of all the natural offspring of church members: I shall only say, at present, though professed believers and their children are alike interested in the covenant, and visibly heirs of salvation, and as such, the subjects of church ordinances; yet, this does no more insure final salvation to all the children, than it does to all adult professors. But this will be further considered in the sequel. And, if the covenant of grace, in respect of its external administration, comprehends some who are not partakers of its spiritual and saving blessings, we have no more reason to think this subject incredible, than that the visible church, which is the subject of ordinances, should contain hypocrites. The rule God has given to direct us in our administrations, was never designed to make a perfect separation of the elect from the rest of mankind, in this world. This is none of our concerns. "The Lord knoweth them that are his."

first day of the week, is any proof that the fourth commandment is repealed. How weakly then do men urge the change of the outward token of admission into the church from circumcision to baptism, as a proof that the covenant with Abraham is disannulled.

But our opponents, "deny, that baptism comes in the room " of circumcision." And if we should suppose with them, that it does not, it would be no proof but that the covenant itself may remain, though the outward token be laid aside, as it is certain that the same covenant for substance had been revealed to, and administered in the church, long before circumcision was instituted. And if the covenant remain, infants are still church members, and consequently are the subjects of baptism, as all church members are allowed to be. But, indeed, it is no better than wrangling to deny that baptism comes in the room of circumcision: What we mean by the assertion is, that circumcision being abrogated under the gospel dispensation, baptism was instituted to be an outward token of an interest in the new covenant, the sacramental rite of admission into the visible church, the sign and badge of membership, even as circumcision had been to the fathers; and in a word, that it answers the like purposes in the gospel church, and is of like mystical and spiritual significance, as circumcision was under the former dispensation. And this I should think our adversaries can scarce deny. And, besides, the apostle terms baptism the circumcision of Christ, or the christian circumcision, Col. ii. 12. And he calls baptized christians the Circumcision under the gospel, as the people of God had been wont to be stiled. Phil. iii. 3. And it is certain, that the primitive christians viewed the matter in this light, and speak of baptism as the gospel circumcision. But we may have occasion to consider this point further in the sequel.

Indeed, as circumcision was afterwards annexed to the Horeb covenant, and so became an ordinance of the national church, and worldly sanctuary of the Jews, binding the subjects to the observance of the whole Mosaic law, in this relation and respect, it must of course have ceased with the other Jewish ordinances, when that old covenant was abrogated---And if our opponents only mean to deny, that baptism comes in the room of circumcision, considered as a Mosaic ordinance, we shall not contend with them. But it should be remembered, that circumcision had been appointed as a token of the Abrahamic covenant, long before the Horeb covenant and national constitution of the church had a being. And I shall shew, that the Abrahamic covenant is the very same that the gospel church is now under; and that it never was disannulled. But as circumcision had been annexed to the Horeb covenant, and so became a Mosaic ordinance, when God shook heaven and earth, and put an end to this old covenant, and the national hierarchy, he was pleased to lay cir-

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cumcision quite aside, and appoint baptism in its stead, as the sacrament of induction into his gospel church. But that covenant which had been revealed to Abraham, and had been the foundation of the church from the beginning, was not shaken or made void, but confirmed; as we shall see.

It is objected, "That the apostle has declared, that the covenant, which was the foundation of the Jewish church, of which infants were members, is waxed old, and vanished away." Heb. viii. 8, 9. I answer, The covenant which the apostle says was ready to vanish, was that, which God made with the Fathers, in the day that he took them by the hand, to lead them out of Egypt; that is, the covenant at Horeb. But that covenant, which is the foundation of infant church membership had been revealed to Abraham hundreds of years before; and the apostle does not say, that this had waxed old, or was disannulled; but the contrary. Infants were indeed members of the national hierarchy of the Jews, which is abolished. But they had been church members long before this national church was formed; nor was the foundation of their membership shaken, when that dispensation was taken away.

There is another objection against our supposing that the Abrahamic covenant is that new covenant, which the gospel church is under, which looks more plausible; though I do not find, that our opponents have made use of it: And that is, "That the apostle calls the christian covenant a new one, as compared with that old one, which was vanishing. But it seems we make this new covenant much older than the covenant of Horeb; even as old as Abraham, and nearly as old as the creation." But the answer is not difficult. Though the revelation of the new covenant was as early as the first constitution of a church in the world, and the grace and blessings of it reached backward to the fathers in the earliest ages; yet the covenant itself was not ratified and sealed, till the shedding of Christ's blood. It was the death of the testator that confirmed the New Testament. This was long after the old covenant had been ratified and sealed by the blood of beasts. At the sealing the new covenant, the old began to vanish. The apostle, therefore, very properly places the date of the new covenant at the time when it was solemnly ratified and sealed, and not when it was first notified and promised. The efficacy of the new covenant, as well as of Christ's sacrifice, extended to every past age of the church; and they who died long before this sacrifice was offered, and this covenant sealed, had an interest in them.---Briefly then, the death of Christ, instead of disannulling the covenant of Abraham, and the church membership of infants, has confirmed and ratified both; as I shall now go on to prove; having thus far touched, and I hope, removed, the most considerable objections to this assertion.

54 *The Abrahamic Covenant confirmed by Christ.*

Let it then be considered, that the covenant of Abraham, containing a charter of privileges for the church, and the right of membership for infant children, being an undoubted privilege granted in this covenant; it must be presumptuous and injurious for any to deny that this covenant stands in force, or to pretend, that infants are now cut off from this right and privilege, unless they can prove, that God has taken away this covenant, or at least has cancelled that article, which is the foundation of infant church membership. But there is no intimation in the scriptures that this covenant is disannulled; or that infants are cut off from their interest in it. The old covenant, which the apostle says was vanishing, was the covenant made with the Israelites, when God led them out of Egypt, as has been shewn. But of the abolishing that covenant which constitutes infants, church members, there is nothing to be found in the whole bible. And, till it can be proved to be abolished, it must be considered and held as valid as ever.

It is further to be observed, That this is called an everlasting Covenant, Gen. xvii. 7. which would be a decisive proof, that it was not disannulled, were it not that we find the word, Everlasting, in scripture, sometimes signifying a limited duration. But it must at least signify, that this covenant was to continue till it was taken away by the same divine authority, by which it was at first established. And as we find no sort of evidence that it has either been vacated or abridged, we conclude that it still abides in full force.

The apostles are so far from teaching, that Christ has disannulled God's gracious covenant with the fathers, or taken away any of the privileges therein granted to them or their children, that Paul asserts to the contrary, in Rom. xv. 8. "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers." These promises are summarily contained in the covenant with Abraham, that the Lord would be a God to him and his seed; that he should be a father of many nations; and that all the nations of the earth should be blessed in him. These promises are all confirmed by Christ. Abraham is the patriarch of the church. He is constituted the father of all them that believe; of all the people of God, of every nation; who are adopted into his family. Even the Gentiles, who were not his natural descendants, are received into the number, and entitled to the privileges of his children. He is made the father of more nations, than are derived from his blood. All the nations of the earth derive blessings from him, and hold their church privileges under him, as his children and heirs. The covenant with Abraham, has indeed, been accomplished, more eminently since Christ confirmed it, than ever before. His family has been larger, and he has been made a father of more nations than ever. This article of the covenant, which receives the children

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children with the parents into the church, is confirmed, as well as the rest. It would be most unreasonable to think otherwise, when the scriptures never hint that this article is rescinded.--- And we have besides, good evidence, that the christian church has not lost this privilege, but their children are still children of the covenant, to greater advantage than ever,

The apostle tells us again, that "The covenant with Abraham" was confirmed of God in Christ, and that the law which was "430 years after, could not disannul it." Gal. iii. 17. And will any yet insinuate, that Christ has disannulled this covenant, which God confirmed in him? This would overthrow the apostle's argument; who confutes the error of the Judaizing teachers about justification, by the stability of the Abrahamic covenant: which would be inconclusive, if that covenant was not in force*.

Indeed, the third chapter to the Galatians, and fourth to the Romans are a proof, that the covenant with Abraham abides in force, under the gospel dispensation, and that Gentile believers, with their children, have an interest in it, which can never be evaded. The apostle says, that "They who are of faith, are the children of Abraham, and are blessed with faithful Abraham†." And being his adopted children, they are heirs. They inherit the blessings of his covenant; and all those privileges of church membership, which were granted to Abraham and his seed, belong to believers. And as it was one covenant privilege of the children of Abraham, to have their infant children taken into the covenant and church with them: This privilege is transmitted by the covenant, to all who are adopted into the family of Abraham; otherwise they are cut off from a part of that inheritance of church privileges which was intailed upon the children of Abraham. The apostle adds, "The blessing of Abraham is come upon the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ‡." Which is, as if he had said, the blessings and privileges granted in the covenant with Abraham belong and are conveyed to the Gentile church. The very same privileges without any diminution, both for them and their children. "If ye are Christ's,

* It is objected, that "the covenant, of which circumcision was appointed for a token, was not 430 years before the giving of the law; and so could not be that covenant, which the apostle says was confirmed of God in Christ." But, I answer, that it was the same covenant for substance, that had been revealed to Abraham many years before circumcision was instituted. And if the apostle reckons from an earlier revelation of the same covenant, than that in Gen. xvii. it will not affect our argument from these words: Since it was one and the same covenant that was repeatedly revealed to Abraham at different times, and was confirmed of God in Christ.

† Gal. iii. 7, 9.

‡ ver. 14.

"Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise †." Whatever privileges were by the covenant and promise of God granted to the children and heirs of Abraham, whether for themselves and their seed, the christian Gentiles are entitled to. For they also are declared to be the children and heirs of Abraham. To the same purpose the apostle writes in the fourth chapter to the Romans, quoting those words of the covenant, "I have made thee a father of many nations ¶," as a proof, that Gentile believers are the children of Abraham; and consequently are comprehended in the covenant and church, together with their offspring.

Again, In Eph. iii. 6. we read, "That the Gentiles are fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ, by the gospel." That is, they are fellow heirs with the Jews of the blessing and covenant of Abraham, they are admitted to that inheritance of spiritual privileges, which God's covenant and promise conveyed to his descendants; they are of the same body the church, which was formed by this covenant; and partakers of the promise; that same promise of the covenant which had been the great privilege of the church all along, and was expressly to them and their children *. And this seems to

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† Gal. iii. 29.

¶ Rom. iv. 16, 17.

* In vain would our opponents evade these proofs by alledging, "That it is only the spiritual children of Abraham, that have an interest in the covenant of Abraham, and are heirs of the privileges therein contained." In answer to this, it may suffice to give a plain and brief state of the case. The covenant with Abraham contains a grant of external church privileges, and also of saving blessings, to his children and heirs, that is the church. The spiritual children of Abraham (if we may use the term of distinction) are the invisible church, who are in God's account heirs according to the promise, to whom the special grace of the covenant is savingly applied. But, as the spiritual seed are known only to God, and as it is the will of God to have a visible church, in which his ordinances should be outwardly administered by men, according to rules by him prescribed; so he has given direction, that all those who are visibly and in the account of the church children and heirs of Abraham, or church members, should be admitted to the outward ordinances and privileges of God's covenanted people. And God has plainly declared, that all the natural posterity of Abraham in their generations, were to be received as his heirs, members of the visible church, and in human acceptation interested in that covenant, in which it was promised, that he would be a God to him and his seed. All these, I say, were visibly heirs of Abraham, until disinherited or cut off from his family by divine direction. And

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Believers and their Children in Abraham's Covenant. 57

point out the true interpretation of that ancient prophecy in Gen. ix. 27. "God shall enlarge, or persuade Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant." Hereby we are to understand, that the Gentiles, who were the posterity of Japheth, should be taken into the house and family of Abraham, descended from Shem: that is, they

not only the natural posterity, but all others, who should desire to join with them in the faith and worship of the true God, were also to be reputed and admitted together with their children, as heirs of Abraham by adoption---And accordingly, he became the adoptive father of many nations, besides his natural descendants. Now, as believers are the children and heirs of Abraham, as Paul says, and as the blessing of Abraham is come upon the Gentiles, their natural posterity must stand upon the same footing exactly with the children of the other heirs, and so are to be accounted and admitted as visible heirs of those privileges which were entailed upon the family of Abraham in their successive generations. For the covenant contained an intail of the same outward privileges on the children of those heirs: It conveyed the right of heirship to them and their seed, until they should be disinherited by divine order.---As therefore the natural posterity of Abraham were certainly visibly in covenant, and as such had a right to the ordinances and privileges of the church, though many of them were not, in God's account, the spiritual children of Abraham, so are also the natural posterity of all believers who are also the children and heirs of Abraham: the intail of these privileges on the children being an article of the covenant of Abraham, and a part of that blessing of his which is come upon the Gentiles---Nor is this blessing any otherwise restricted to the spiritual seed now than it had been all along. Though in God's account all were not Israel that were of Israel, yet in the account of the church, and with respect to an external right to church privileges, they all stood upon a level. Though the special grace of the covenant is secured only to the spiritual seed, yet the outward privileges of communion with the visible church belong to all who are visibly interested in the covenant, and so in human account the heirs of Abraham, that is, to professed believers, and their children. In fine, as the old covenant was made with the house of Israel, including the little ones, as the phrase commonly signifies, and as all acknowledge, so the new covenant is also made with the house of Israel, Heb. viii. 8, 9, and so must, in like manner, include the whole family, even the infants of confederate believers.---Salvation comes to their house, as Christ said to Zaccheus; that is, to their family, according to that promise, Jer. xxx. 20. Their children shall be as aforetime, that is, children and heirs of the covenant. And accordingly it

they should be taken into that same church, and enjoy the privileges of that same covenant, in which the children of Abraham were born and lived. For to suppose the meaning to be, as some take it, that "God shall dwell in the tents of Shem," will make the last clause of the verse a needless repetition of what had been said just before; viz. that Canaan should be the servant of Shem; whereas, it is much rather to be understood, as foretelling that Canaan should be his servant who was to dwell in the tents of Shem, that is Japheth's. However, it matters little how we take this text, as long as we have much clearer and more convictive proofs in the New Testament, that Christians with their children are taken into the same covenant and church in which Abraham and his seed had an interest and standing.---Two or three more I will mention, which are, I think, very full to this purpose.

In Rom. xi. 16, 17, the Apostle says, "If the root be holy so are the branches." By the root we are to understand the patriarchs, the fathers of the Jews; and the branches are their descendants. The patriarchs were holy as being in covenant, and members of the church; and their children the natural branches, are also holy in this respect. For, they were also comprehended in the covenant and church with their parents. It is a federal holiness, the holiness of church membership, or a visible separation and dedication to God, that is here attributed both to the root and branches. They being of the visible church, were called a holy people; and the outward ordinances and privileges of the church were theirs. Inherent sanctification is not the holiness here meant. For that is not derived from parents to children by natural generation. The branches are not therefore the subjects of saving grace, because the root is so. But, if the root, or the parents, are federally holy, as being of the church, and interested in the covenant; so are the branches, or the children: For these also are in the covenant, and of the church. This was undoubtedly the case in the Old Testament church, as all allow. They were born church members. The branches were as much so as the root. If the former were holy, the latter were so of consequence; and the token of church membership was put upon them in their infancy. The Apostle goes on, "If some of the branches" (that is, the unbelieving Jews) were broken off, and thou, (a Gentile) being a wild olive, wert grafted in among them, and

is promised in that most remarkable prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles into the gospel church, Isa. xlix. 22. that God would lift up his hand to the Gentiles, and set up his standard to the people, and they should bring the sons of Zion, or the members of the church, in their arms, &c. as infants are wont to be carried.---A plain intimation that the gospel church was to receive infants.

“with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree ;
“boast not.” Though the branches had the federal holiness of church members, yet they were liable to be broken off. Thus it befel the greater part of the Jews : They were by their unbelief broken off from the stock they before stood upon, that is, the church. They lost their standing therein, and the privileges of members : And the Gentiles were grafted in to the same olive, from which the unbelieving Jews were broken. They were taken into that very covenant and church, along with the believing Jews, who were the natural branches, that never were broken off, but maintained their standing. The olive tree of the church, springing from Abraham as its root, or patriarch, and constituted by the Abrahamic covenant, was not cut down, and a new one planted. The church, which had stood from the early ages of the world, was not dissolved, and a new one formed upon a foundation and plan entirely different : But the Gentiles were grafted in along with the believing Jews, who were the only living and sound branches that remained, after the unbelieving Jews were broken off. They became the adopted children of Abraham, were taken into the church, which was still considered as his family. The olive tree still stood upon the same root as before ; and the Gentile converts were admitted into the same covenant, were laid under its bonds, and vested with all its privileges, to as great advantage as if they had been the natural branches, or descendants from the holy fathers. This is what is meant, by their “partaking of the root and fatness of the olive.” The unbelieving Jews could not possibly be broken off from any church, but that which was formed by the Abrahamic covenant, of which infants were certainly members ; for they never belonged to any other. The Gentiles were grafted into the same tree, from which the others had been broken. They partook of the same root and fatness ; that is, were endowed with the same covenant privileges. Which is a full proof, that the covenant with Abraham is not abolished, but remains in force, and that the church constituted by it, of which infants were undoubted members, was not dissolved ; but that the Christian Gentiles are taken into it, along with the believing Jews, who still remained in it ; and the children of the believing Gentiles still had the same right and privilege of church membership which Abraham’s posterity had all along. And this is agreeable to the warning which Christ gave the Jews. Matth. xxi. 43. “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation that shall bring forth the fruits thereof.” The same kingdom of God, or church privileges, which were taken from the Jews, were given undiminished, to the Gentiles. To this we may add those words, Matth. viii. 11. “Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.” That is, the Gentiles shall be taken into the

the family of Abraham; into the same covenant and church privileges with them, (so the words are expounded by some good interpreters) "but the children of the kingdom, (the unbelieving Jews) shall be cast out (of the church) into outer darkness;" they shall be abandoned and given up to ignorance, blindness, and infidelity, like the heathen, who are without; as well as punished by terrible plagues in this world, and by the fire of God's wrath, which shall burn to the lowest hell; under which they shall weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth for rage and anguish.

The exceptions of the Antepedobaptists to this argument are of no weight. They deny that the Gentile converts were taken into the Jewish church, which, they say, was abolished and taken away. 'Tis true, the national church state, formed by the covenant of Horeb, was taken away, as well as the political government of the Jews. But the church of God, formed by the covenant with Abraham, had subsisted long before. Nor was this covenant disannulled by that of Horeb, as the apostle teaches. The Gentiles were grafted into that olive, or church, from which the Jews were broken off: and that must be the Jewish church as constituted by the Abrahamic covenant. Though the Mosaic hierarchy was falling, the church stood firm under that same covenant by which it had been formed long before that hierarchy was erected. This is that covenant on which the church membership of infants is founded; out of which the unbelieving Jews were cast; and into which the Gentiles were taken.

Some have pretended that "Christ is the holy root, and "Christians are the branches, which the apostle here means." But this is manifestly absurd. For then we must say, that some of Christ's branches are broken off; that is, the infidel Jews, who never were in Christ, no not so much as by an outward profession of faith in him.

But the more common pretence is, "That the gospel church, "constituted at first of believing Jews, is the olive, into which the "Gentile converts were grafted." But how could the unbelieving Jews be broken off from the Christian church, when they never were in or of it? To this it is only said, that the unbelieving Jews were left out of the church. What! Is that a breaking off? A strange fancy! A new, unheard of way of breaking off what never was on. Is the Christian church their own olive tree, and are they the natural branches who never were branches of it at all; never were in it?

It is indeed a matter of patience, to see how heroically men who are devoted to their schemes, will kick against the pricks, and affirm and deny almost any thing, rather than give them up. The plainest and most pointed scripture testimonies that stand directly in opposition to them, avail nothing. New senses, never heard of before, must be forced on common words. Holiness must mean legitimacy; breaking off must signify leaving out

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what was never in ; rather than infants be allowed any place in the church. In this way of managing a debate, people never need fear being convinced. They are out of the reach of argument.

But, let us once more hear what the scripture says.--When those, who were pricked in their hearts, on the day of Pentecost, said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Peter said unto them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts ii. 38, 39. That it was the covenant with Abraham, that is here called the promise, will appear from the following considerations.---

1. This covenant is commonly in the New Testament called the Promise, by way of distinction and eminency. See Rom. iv. 13, 14. "For the Promise, that he should be heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For, if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made vain, and the Promise of none effect. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace ; to the end that the Promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all." Gal. iii. 17. and on, "The covenant which was before confirmed of God in Christ, the law which was 430 years after cannot disannul, that it should make the Promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by Promise. If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the Promise." Once more. Gal. iv. 28. "We, as Isaac, are children of the Promise."

In all these places, and in divers others, the covenant with Abraham is called the Promise ; which shews that it was commonly so styled. 2. If we compare this text with Acts iii. 25. we shall find the promise there explained, to mean the covenant with Abraham. For the apostle, there addressing the Jews, to persuade them to repent and be converted, in like manner as he had done on the day of Pentecost, proposes the very same encouragement to them in these words: "Ye are the children of the covenant which God made with our fathers, Saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." His telling them that "they were the children of Abraham's covenant," is to the same purpose exactly, as if he had told them, that the Promise was to them and their children. For this covenant was undoubtedly to the parents and their infants children. And their being declared children of the covenant, signified that they were heirs to the privileges of the covenant. That these texts are exactly parallel, and explain each other.

The same apostle, preaching to the same sort of hearers, (that is the Jews) proposes the same argument in different words, even their interest in the promise, or covenant with Abraham, in order to enforce the same exhortation, viz. Repentance and conversion for the remission of sins. So that we cannot reasonably doubt, whether the promise here spoken of, be not the covenant with Abraham, if we will allow the apostle to explain his own words. 3. What the apostle here says of the promise, agrees exactly in every particular, with the Abrahamic covenant, which had all along included the posterity of Abraham and their infant children, together with the Gentiles that were afar off, even as many of them, as the Lord did from time to time call into his church, and who, in obedience to this call, became proselytes, or Comers, as the word properly signifies.---All, who upon the divine call, Came from afar to join themselves to the Lord, and his people, were received, together with their children, into the church and covenant by circumcision; and the promise was to them and their children also, as has been observed. The covenant of Abraham, did belong to all those, who were in, and of the church. Peter's hearers, with their children, being actual members in the church, did not need a new call into the church, in order to their being the children of the covenant and promise. But, with the Gentiles who were afar off, and out of the church, the case was otherwise. They must first be called in, and become proselytes, before the promise would be to them and theirs. But so many as were thus called, and admitted into the family of Abraham, had an interest in the covenant and promise, as well as the Jews. Thus the case had stood all along according to the Abrahamic covenant; and thus the case stood upon the day of Pentecost, as Peter says. Which shews that it was this covenant that Peter had in his eye, when he said, "The promise is to you and your children." That his words are therefore to be explained according to the tenor of the Abrahamic covenant: That this covenant, which is the foundation of infant church membership, was not then abolished; but stood in force: And I presume no one will say it has been abolished since.

In this manner Peter's hearers must have understood his words. They had been born and bred in that church and covenant, which included both parents and children. They knew that infants had always been acknowledged as church members, ever since a church had been formed in the world. The idea of a church which should not admit the children with the parents, would have been as new and strange to them, as a church that would not admit females, would be to us. A promise, or covenant conveying, privileges to them and their children, would be naturally understood by them in the same manner as those promises in the Old Testament, which so often occur in the same form of expression, had constantly been taken; and particularly

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the promise to Abraham, which was the most eminent and fundamental. They would as naturally conclude that their young children are immediately respected, as we should conclude ours to be in an instrument, conveying privileges to us and our heirs; and they would have no doubt, that a grant of privileges was here asserted to the children of those who were in the covenant and church, more than to the children of heathens. Now as the words of the apostle would carry this meaning most naturally and obviously to the understanding of his hearers, and as the same form of expression elsewhere is constantly to be thus understood, and no reason appears why it may not be taken here in the same sense; this must in all reason be received as the true interpretation. And if this promise belonged to the infant children of the *in* church and covenanted Jews, at the day of Pentecost, none will deny that it still belongs to the children of the Gentiles, who were afar off; even as many as it pleases the Lord to call into his gospel church.

This promise Peter holds up to the Jews, as a warrant or reason why they should be baptized in the name of Christ. Repent and be baptized; For the promise is to you, &c. Now if their interest in the promise was a good reason why they should be baptized, as the apostle asserts; then their childrens having an interest in the promise with them (as is also asserted) is as good a reason for their being baptized; even as an interest in the covenant was a reason for circumcision to Abraham and his children.

This text is then a substantial proof that the covenant of Abraham stood in force, after the gospel dispensation took place: Since this appears to be that very promise which Peter addresses to his hearers. And we see that that particular clause, which contains a grant of the privilege of church membership to the children of God's people was not taken out, when "Christ the minister of the circumcision confirmed by his death the promises made to the fathers." We then, and all others, whom God shall call into his church, together with our children, as the adopted children and heirs of Abraham, have an interest in this promise; are members of the gospel church; and the proper subjects of christian baptism.

The evasions of this proof of infants church membership and interest in the covenant, which our opponents have invented, are unnatural, improbable and absurd. They would persuade us, "That the Promise here spoken of was not the covenant with Abraham, but the promise of the pouring out of the spirit in Joel." But how can this be, when the apostle says that the prophecy of Joel foretold those miraculous gifts of the spirit, speaking with tongues, and prophesying, which appeared on the day of Pentecost? Are these gifts promised to, and conferred upon all, whom the Lord shall call? Besides, I have proved, that the promise here mentioned, was the covenant with Abraham;

and till the reasons adduced are shewn to be without weight, it is folly to set up an unproved assertion in opposition to them. But whatever the promise may be supposed to be, it belonged to Peter's hearers, and their children, as he says; and he holds it up to them as a reason for their being baptized. It must therefore be a reason for the baptism of their children also. If the gift of the Holy Ghost was promised to them, it was to their children. And they were to be considered as subjects of baptism on account of the promise; not because the gifts of the spirit were manifest in them, but in order to their receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. For it is to be observed, that the gift of the Holy Ghost is proposed as the consequence, and not the pre-requisite of baptism. "Be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

But to give this plea the greatest advantage, let us suppose that the pouring out of the spirit in his ordinary sanctifying influences is the matter of that promise in Joel; though Peter explains it otherwise: And that this is the promise, which he, in this text proposes to his hearers, as respecting them and their children, though we have seen him explain himself otherwise.--Our argument from these words, would yet stand good. For the promise of the sanctifying spirit being included in the blessing of Abraham, as the apostle plainly teaches us, in Gal. iii. 14. and it being several times particularly promised to the seed of God's covenanted people, (The Lord will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed. I will pour my spirit on thy seed, &c.) We may hence infer, that they to whom this promise belongs, are interested in the covenant and blessing of Abraham, and may properly be recognized as of the church and people of God.

And in the faith and hope of the accomplishment of this promise, God's covenanted people should dedicate their infant seed to him, and have the token of his gracious covenant put upon them.

It is further said, "That the children to whom the promise belongs, are not infants, but adults--the posterity of the Jews." But though adults are the children of their parents, yet infants too are doubtless children. What warrant then have any to deny that they have an interest in that promise, which is to the children indefinitely, without any exception of infants?

But the evasion which is most insisted on, is, "That the promise is restrained to those only, whom the Lord shall call: and infants give no evidence of their being called." But this will not bear examination. I have already shewn, that this promise was the covenant with Abraham, and is therefore to be explained according to the tenor of that covenant, which included him and his children, and so many of the Gentiles as God should from time to time call into his church. The calling of Abraham was a sufficient call to all his posterity, to give them a visible interest

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terest in the covenant, and standing in the church, till they forfeited and were cut off from this privilege. The restraining clause, therefore, only respected those who were not yet called into the church of God, and not those Jews and their children who were then actual members and children of the covenant. Repentance and baptism, in the name of Christ, were required to prevent their being cut off from the covenant, and family of Abraham; but the promise was then to them and their children. There is a plain reason why the promise should respect only so many of those, who are without, as the Lord should call. But how absurdly would the apostle speak, according to the interpretation which the Antepedobaptists put upon his words. "The promise is to you and your children. But neither you, nor your children appear at present, to have any interest in it; and no one knows, that they ever will have. You are not to imagine that either you or your children are entitled to any privilege by it, more than belongs to every man and child in the world. All that I mean is, that the promise will belong to those who shall be called. If this should prove to be the case with any of you, or of your children, or any other person, then, and not till then, the promise will be to you and them." If this be all that is intended, it had been much more plainly expressed by only saying, "The promise will be to those, whom the Lord shall call." To what purpose is all this flourish of words, without meaning? What end can this particular mention of them, and their children, as interested in the promise, serve, unless to persuade them, that some special privilege belonged to them, while there was nothing at all in it? It is either insignificant, or fallacious; and would convey to the understanding of the hearers either no meaning, or a false one*.

Suppose

* Dr. Gill has given a most improbable and strange account, why Peter declares the promise to appertain to their children. Says he, "Whereas they had imprecated Christ's blood, not only upon themselves but their posterity, for which they were under great concern; they are told this promise of salvation by Christ reached to them also, provided they repented and were baptized; which is the reason that mention is made of their children." Reply to Clark. But how does it appear, that these Jews were pricked in their hearts with great concern for their posterity. When addressing themselves to the apostles for advice, they say not one word about their children: Could they think there was no pardoning mercy for their children, upon their repentance, after the apostle had told them, that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved?" After pardon had been offered to those, who had been personally concerned in the murder of Christ, no scruple could remain concerning

Suppose it were declared, that all the privileges contained in our frame of government belonged to the native subjects and their children, and also to foreigners, even as many as the government should naturalize; and some one pretending to give the sense of this declaration should contend, that according to it, neither the native subjects, nor their children, had a right to any of these privileges, unless they should be first naturalized by an act of the government; would he not be thought ridiculously absurd? The adversaries of infant church membership, are equally absurd and unreasonable, in their way of explaining the apostle's words.

The argument from this text we have so long been considering, cannot be evaded. And we may further add, that since it is on all hands allowed to have been a great privilege of the Jewish infants, that they were in the covenant and church of God; if the infants of christians are left out of the church, as our opponents teach, then the gospel church is deprived of an important privilege, which the Jewish church enjoyed: And its constitution is less favourable to infants. Formerly, they were children of the covenant, and the people of God; and as such had many great and precious promises made to them, for the comfort and encouragement of their parents and them. But now, if we will hearken to some men, they are all to be ranked with the children of those, who are strangers to the covenant of promise, who are without hope, and without God in the world: And the uncovenanted mercy of God is the only ground of hope that remains for them. If it were a privilege to the Jewish infants to be members of the church of God, no good reason can be given, why a right of membership in the church should not still be as great a privilege to the infants of christians. But can we believe, that the gospel dispensation has diminished the privileges of the church in any instance; or that it has put any class of mankind, whether infants or adults, in a more disadvantageous state than before; depriving them, without any fault of theirs, of their standing in the church of God, which is acknowledged to have been an important privilege? This ought not to be supposed, unless clear and positive proof of it could be produced. But no such proof has been or can be found. Wherefore, to bring this argument to a point: The privilege of church membership has certainly been granted to the infant children of God's professing people; which grant stands in force till it be revoked. Our opponents have often been called upon to produce an authentic act of revocation, and the demand is reasonable. This they cannot do. On the contrary,

cerning their posterity, whether there was hope of pardon for them upon their repentance. Nor had the apostle any occasion to mention their children as interested in the promise, to ease their minds of such a scruple.

contrary, we demonstrate, that this grant has not been revoked, but is renewed, confirmed, and ratified in the gospel.

As a proper appendix to what has thus far been discoursed of the interest of infants in the church covenant, I shall just mention that common argument from baptism succeeding in the room of circumcision; but shall not enlarge upon it. As infants were the subjects of circumcision, and were recognized and marked as the people of God by this rite, the conclusion is very natural and reasonable, that if baptism comes in the place of circumcision, as the token of admission into the church, infants are the proper subjects of this ordinance; unless God has declared to the contrary; which can never be made to appear. It is indeed denied by our opponents, that baptism does come in the place of circumcision. But I cannot find that they have explained themselves distinctly, how far, and in what respect, they mean to deny it. I own that baptism does not answer all the same purposes under the gospel dispensation, that circumcision did under the Mosaic. It does not introduce the subjects into a national church, and worldly sanctuary. It has not a typical respect to the Saviour to come. It is not a yoke of bondage, obliging to the observance of the carnal ordinances of the law of Moses. And our opponents, if they will be ingenuous and reasonable, must allow that baptism does, in many respects, come in the place of circumcision. It answers similar ends in the gospel church; and is of the same general signification; and is to be applied to the same subjects, that is, church members; and has even the same name given to it; and upon the institution of baptism, as an ordinance of standing and universal obligation, circumcision was no longer the token of admission into the visible church, as it had been before. And this is all we mean, when we assert, that baptism succeeds to circumcision.

As circumcision was the outward token of the covenant, and of admission into the church; so baptism is the token of church membership, and of an interest in the new covenant; which I have proved, is substantially the same with that of Abraham, to which circumcision was annexed. They are both the appointed sign and badge of the people of God. As circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith to Abraham, so is baptism to christians.

Again, circumcision and baptism though different in external rites are alike in their spiritual signification. They both pointed out our native corruption, and need of purification, by an inward and spiritual renovation. They both signified cleansing from the guilt and defilement of sin by the blood of Christ, an admission into the church---a dedication to God, an obligation to walk in his commandments and ordinances, and a right to covenant privileges.

It is further to be observed, that baptism in the New Testament bears the name of the circumcision of Christ, or the christian circumcision. Col. ii. 11, 12. And the apostle calls christians the Circumcision, under the gospel; which was the common appellation of those, who had under the former dispensation, received the token of induction into the church. A sufficient intimation that the one takes the place of the other.

Accordingly, circumcision ceased to be longer the token of church membership, after Christ sent out his apostles to preach and baptize in his name, when baptism was made the standing rite of admission into the gospel church.

For these reasons, we cannot but consider baptism as taking that place in the gospel œconomy, in which circumcision stood under the old dispensation; though we readily allow that each of these ordinances had some peculiar ends and significations, suited to the different states of the church, in which they were respectively in force; in respect of which peculiarities they may not properly be parallel. And hence we argue, that since circumcision and baptism are manifestly similar in their main ends, uses and significancies; infants are as proper subjects of baptism, as they were of circumcision; and that the divine order for administering the one ordinance to them, warrants our administering that other ordinance that comes in its room. And the argument is not only popular, but of real weight; though I do not lay the greatest stress upon it.

But it is objected, "That the scriptures do not say, that baptism comes in the room of circumcision." I answer, Paul's terming baptism the circumcision of Christ, is a plain intimation to this purpose. And the reasons I have adduced, which are grounded on the scripture, are a sufficient evidence of the truth of the assertion, as it has been explained.

It is further objected, "That the outward rites are very unlike." But I can see no weight in this. The different states of the church under the Old and New Testament might require this difference of outward administration respecting the initiating rite.

It is further objected, "That the subjects of baptism and circumcision were different. Circumcision was to be administered only to males, baptism to both sexes." I answer. The circumcision of the males was the appointed token of church membership to the people of God of both sexes. The females were accounted of the circumcision; and were admitted to the holy ordinances which were interdicted to the uncircumcised and unclean.

It is objected again, "That baptism was in use and force before circumcision was abolished." I answer. Though baptism was administered by John, and the disciples of Christ, a short time before circumcision was abolished, yet this no more proves that the former succeeds not in the room of the latter, than Solomon's

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mon's reigning with his father a short time, is a proof that he did not succeed and reign in his stead. But though baptism was in use before, it was not fully established as the rite of induction into the church, till the mission of the apostles; after which, circumcision was no longer required for that purpose, as it had been before; though for other reasons it continued in use among the believing Jews some years longer.

It is further inquired, "What need there was that those who had been circumcised should be baptized, if they are both ordinances of the same use and significancy?" I answer, It was the will of Christ, that all his disciples should receive the new token and badge of church membership, although they had been admitted members of the Old Testament church. And such as would not recognize themselves as his disciples, were to be rejected, and unchurched, and be as branches broken off by their unbelief. Their circumcision became uncircumcision, and the token of their being the people of God became null and void.

But these things I pass over briefly. For, though I think they are well worthy of consideration, yet they may not be of so much importance in the main argument, as many have been apt to suppose. But after all, some may think the doctrine we plead for will involve us in an unsurmountable difficulty. For, it may be said, "the new covenant contains a grant, not only of external privileges, but of all spiritual and saving blessings; and so must secure eternal Salvation to all that have an interest in it. But can we think that all the seed of visible or real believers will be finally saved? And to say that the covenant grant is conditional, if they perform the duties required on their part, will not help the matter. For if such a conditional grant be all, this is not peculiar to the seed of believers, but the same conditional promise is made to all mankind. And besides, it is to be remembered that whatever conditions may be supposed in the new covenant grant, there is an effectual provision made in the promise of all that grace that is needful to work in us to will and to do whatever is required of us in order to salvation. So that still the salvation of those who are interested in the covenant, seems to be as sure and stable as the covenant itself."

In answer to this objection, I would say, that the new covenant does indeed contain a grant of all saving blessings to believers and their seed, but with this difference: All true believers have a firm promise of all saving blessings for themselves, whereby eternal salvation is secured to them. The same blessings are indefinitely promised to their children. That is, though it be not promised that all the children of believers shall have that grace conferred on them, which shall issue in their eternal salvation, yet it is an article of the new covenant, that "God will pour out his spirit on the seed of his covenanted people, and his blessing on their offspring; by means of which, they shall spring

"spring up as the grass: And that he will circumcise the heart of their seed to fear and love the Lord." Many other promises there are to the same purpose; which may serve as a foundation of a sure hope to them, that some, yea many of their children, shall share with them in all the blessings of the new covenant. These promises are made Especially and in a distinguishing manner to the children of God's people; and they will have their full accomplishment in the salvation of many of them. If it had only been promised, that God would pour out his spirit upon some of the children of men, this would give no peculiar ground of hope, to a believer, respecting the salvation of his children. For those who are in and out of the church, are alike children of men. But the promise, being to them and their children, brings the blessings of salvation home to their house. God may extend his uncovenanted mercy to the heathen, and the families that call not on his name. But he has not engaged himself by a covenant promise to do this for them, as he has to vouchsafe this blessing to the children of his own people. Accordingly, the apostle tells the jailor, that if he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, he should be saved, and his house; which implies, that some at least, if not all his family, should share with him in this blessing.

And surely it ought to be accounted a great thing, to have the blessings of the covenant indefinitely promised to our children, and have them pointed out as those for whom, in particular, God designs his special favour. And accordingly the succession of the church has ordinarily been continued in the families of God's people. "They are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their children after them." They have peculiar encouragement to pray for their children, and to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in hopes that a special blessing will follow their endeavours. And such children have special encouragement to seek the God of their fathers, "who hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain."

Now, such is the effect of this gracious promise to the children of the covenant, that according to the ordinance and appointment of God, all such children are, in the account of the church, members of Christ's mystical body, and heirs of salvation; and particularly are to be admitted into the church by baptism, in like manner as adults are upon a profession of faith. And though the grace of the new covenant promised to the children of believers indefinitely, may not be savingly applied to all of them, yet it is certain that some, yea many (no one knows how many) shall be made the subjects of it. And as all of them have visibly an equal interest in the covenant, it is the will of God that they all should, without distinction, enjoy the same privilege of church membership; and that their being children of the covenant should be taken as a sufficient recommendation of them to the communion of the

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the church, and be accounted as valid and satisfactory an evidence of their being the people of God, as a profession of faith is on behalf of an adult. And if such children should die in infancy, their interest in the covenant is a good ground on which we believe they will be eternally saved. And while they live, they are, according to the gospel rule, the subjects of church privileges and ordinances, as far and as soon as they are capable of, and actually meet for them.

To these scriptural arguments in favour of infant church membership I shall add another consideration, which seems to me to have great weight.

The Jews certainly knew that their infants had an interest in the covenant of Abraham, and had always been acknowledged, received, and recognized by circumcision, as being of the church and people of God. If the apostles had taught that infants were no longer to have an interest in God's covenant, or be members of the church, or receive any token of their being the people of God; the doctrine must have been new, strange, very shocking, and offensive to the Jews. They must certainly have taken notice of it, and been greatly displeased at it. They opposed the apostles with all their might, and did all in their power to render them odious, and set the people against them and their new doctrine. They were ready to take offence, and wanted neither wit nor will to lay hold of and exaggerate a plausible and popular objection. Such an objection they would have had, if the apostles had denied that their children were to be church members any longer. They would not have borne such a doctrine, which declared all their children excommunicated and cut off from the kingdom and people of the Lord, and to have no part in him; but would certainly have urged the objection with a vehemence. And the apostles must have seen, that it highly concerned them to answer the objection, and take up so dangerous a stumbling block, if their doctrine had given so obvious and fair a handle to their enemies against them. But we have no hint in the New Testament, or any author, Jewish, Christian, or Heathen, that ever I could find or learn, that the Jews ever made any such objection to the apostles, or their doctrine; or that the apostles ever attempted either to obviate or silence it, or said one word about it: which is certainly a most violent presumption, and may almost pass for plenary evidence, that the apostles did not, by denying the church membership of infants, furnish an obvious occasion and ground for any such objection.

I shall mention but one argument more, grounded upon the History of Infant Baptism, and the practice of the church from the apostolic age, according to the testimony of the earliest writers. The fact, in short is found to stand thus: 1. That the validity and lawfulness of infant baptism appears not to have ever been denied by any christians till about the year 1130; and then only by

by one Peter de Bruis in France, with his followers, a small sect, which held withal, that no infants were saved, and divers other gross errors, as historians report. It soon dwindled to nothing. After which, there cannot be found a single instance, well vouched, of a person opposing infant baptism (except such as denied water baptism) till the Anabaptists sprang up in Germany about 250 years ago. To this purpose we have the testimony of Doctor Wall, a learned, diligent and faithful writer on the subject, in his *History of Infant Baptism*: These are his words "For the first 400 years there appears only one man, Tertullian, that advised the delay of infant baptism in some cases, and one Gregory that did perhaps practise such delay in the case of his children; but no society so thinking, or so practising; nor no one man saying that it was unlawful to baptize infants. In the next 700 years, there is not so much as one man to be found, that either spoke for, or practised such delay, but all the contrary. And when about the year 1130, one sect among the Waldenses declared against the baptizing of infants, as being incapable of salvation, the main body of that people rejected their opinion: and they of them that held that opinion, quickly dwindled away and disappeared; there being no more heard of holding that tenet, till the rising of the German Antepedobaptists, in the year 1522." Thus far Dr. Wall. To this our opponents have hitherto found nothing to oppose, worthy of credit, except some testimonies to the practice of baptizing adults; which are nothing to the purpose; since no one doubts that unbaptized adults, as well as infants, are the subjects of baptism. Or if any have been found speaking against the baptism of infants, they have appeared to be such as were against all water baptism.

2. On the other hand, we have the express testimony of the learned Christian writers, who lived within one, two, and three hundred years of the apostles, that infant baptism was not only then commonly practised in the church, but had been received and practised from the apostles; and that none were known of, among all the numerous sects of Christians, pretending to deny it.

The testimonies of the fathers to this purpose, are commonly known by those who are moderately versed in this controversy. Justin Martyr, who wrote about 40 years after the apostles, mentions expressly some aged Christians, who were made disciples in, or from their infancy. And though he mentions not their infant baptism, his words fairly imply it. For if they were made disciples in infancy, they were doubtless the subjects of baptism. Irenæus, who is said to have been born in the apostolic age, mentions the baptism of infants. He calls it, indeed, their regeneration;—but so baptism was commonly termed by the ancient fathers, as all who are versed in their writings know and acknowledge. Tertullian who lived within 100 years of the apostles, speaks of the baptizing of infants as a practice of the church; but advises to the delay

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delay of it, except in cases of necessity; though he has nothing to say against the validity and lawfulness of it. He advises also the delay of baptism to adults, till they were married, or confirmed in continency. Though he was singular and whimsical in his opinion, yet he may well be admitted as a credible witness that infant baptism was a common practice in the church at that time. And this is all the use we mean to make of any of the testimonies we shall produce.

Origen, who also lived within 100 years of the apostles, and who was one of the most learned and knowing men of the age, declares, that infants are, by the usage of the church, baptized for the forgiveness of sin. And that an order for the baptizing infants, had been delivered to the church, from the apostles, who knew that the pollution of sin is in all *.

Cyprian, who lived but little more than 100 years after the apostles, gives as full a testimony as possible to the practice of infant baptism at the time he lived. At a council of 66 ministers, held about 150 years after the apostles, it was debated, whether it would not be proper to delay the baptizing of infants, till the eighth day, according to the law of circumcision. [Note, it appears they considered baptism as coming in the room of circumcision.] They were unanimously of opinion, that there was no reason for any such delay.

Passing over divers other testimonies as express as can be desired, I shall only add that of Augustine, about 300 years after the Apostles;

* A late writer, in defence of infant baptism, quoting this testimony of Origen, ascribes it, by mistake, to Irenæus. Dr. Gill, observing the mistake, blusters at a strange rate; charges the writer with forgery; says there is no such passage in Irenæus; defies the whole literary world to produce or point out any such passage in him; and exclaims, "What a wretched cause must infant baptism be, to require such management as this!" Which declaration of the Doctor has been quoted by a pamphlet writer among ourselves (Mr. H. S.) to discredit the accounts given of the antiquity of infant baptism. It seems, therefore fit, that this matter be set in a true light, for the satisfaction of such as may need information.

It is true, this writer was mistaken in ascribing this passage to Irenæus; and the Doctor had a right to correct this slip of his memory. It was not Irenæus, but it was Origen, who lived within 100 years of the apostles, that says "The church received a tradition or order from the apostles to administer baptism to infants." This the Doctor knew: and his breaking out in such a pedantic, abusive, villifying strain, upon occasion of a mistake of so little importance, and the scurrilous insult he offers, not only to the writer, but to the cause itself of infant baptism, must stand as an ignominious sample and monument of dissingenuity, insolence and folly.

apostles ; who declares that infant baptism had been every where constantly practised in the church, ever since the apostles. And disputing against Pelagius and his followers, who denied original sin, he urges the baptism of infants as an argument, that they were subject to the guilt and defilement of it. And his antagonists, though hard pressed with the argument, are so far from calling the right of infant baptism in question, that they acknowledge that they knew not, nor ever heard, that it was denied by any. A remarkable testimony, as coming from persons of eminent learning and abilities, who had travelled over a great part of Christendom, and so had the best opportunity of getting the most certain information, and would at once have got rid of a most troublesome objection against their tenet, if they could have invalidated the authority of infant baptism.

Upon the whole, that infant baptism has been received and practised in the ancient church ever since the apostles is attested by all antiquity, and denied by no one ancient writer. The fathers could not be ignorant what the practice of the church was in a case so notorious as this must have been. If their truth may be relied upon, it is an undeniable fact, that infant baptism has obtained ever since the apostles, and was delivered by them to the church. The great Calvin, therefore declares roundly, "that they who scatter it abroad among the simple vulgar, that infant baptism was for many years unknown in the church, lie most foully : (*sædissime mentiuntur*) since the most ancient writers refer its original to the times of the apostles*."

The exceptions of the contrary party have often been obviated. 1. "They object the fewness of the testimonies" in favor of infant baptism in the early ages of the church : which is nothing strange if their was a universal agreement in sentiment and practice in this matter, as appears to have been the case ; and when it is considered, that but few of the writings of the ancient fathers are come down to us, and that such of them as we have are upon such subjects, as did not lead them to say much of it. But if they speak but sparingly for infant baptism, they say nothing against it, except Tertullian ; who yet objects not to the lawfulness or validity of it, and even allows its expediency in some cases. 2. They surmise, that some of the testimonies are not genuine ; the credit of which have been sufficiently vindicated. Besides this, they have little or nothing to alledge, except arbitrary guesses, and supposals, not worth repeating.

Now, as the practice of the church was doubtless uniform at first in this point, and continued so as long as the apostles lived ; if infants were not baptized during the apostolic age (which continued about 60 years after our Saviour's ascension) it is incredible that the church should so soon, and so universally depart from the rule and order, which had been delivered to, and un-

* " *Instit. lib. 4 Cap. 16 Sect. 2.*

versally received by them. But if any such striking and notorious innovation as our opponents suppose to have taken place, had been moved for; it is surely beyond all belief, that it should be agreed to every where, and not one individual protest against it for more than 1100 years; in which time, there were so many opposite parties and factions among professed christians, who were endeavouring to ruin the credit of each other. He must be ignorant of human nature, that can entertain so extravagant a thought.

I will conclude this argument, and our whole plea, with one remark more. If infant baptism be a meer human invention, of no validity, as our opponents pretend, it is utterly incredible that Christ, "who has promised to be with his church to the end of the world," should suffer it to be so long, and so universally received in the church; and that he should not in more than 1000 years raise up one witness, to bear testimony against so great a corruption of his ordinance, as renders it absolutely void, and of no effect. Can we suppose that Christ had no true church all this time; or that the baptism administered in it was no divine ordinance? How incredible is it, and how dishonourable to Christ, the Head and King of the church, to suppose that he so neglected its interests, as to permit a human invention to take the place of his holy ordinance, and that there should not be found one Christian society, nor so much as one Christian in the world, to witness against such presumption? Can it possibly be imagined, that among so many saints, confessors, and martyrs, who lived in all this time, not one should be found objecting to the lawfulness of infant baptism, if it was a mere nullity, as some would persuade us. Surely Christ has never suffered, nor will suffer the gates of hell to prevail against his church, at this rate. And if we could suppose that a human device had got into the church, instead of the true Christian baptism, no one knows when, or how; yet the German Anabaptists were the most unlikely men in the world to be employed by Christ as the instruments of reforming and restoring his neglected, or lost ordinances; men whose opinions and practices were so extravagant, as none will, at this day, attempt to vindicate; and who seem to have been as manifestly actuated by the devil, as any that we have ever had account of.

Let us now recapitulate what has been thus far discoursed on this argument. It is granted that all those who are members of the visible church, are the proper subjects of baptism. And it appears that the infants of church members, are also of the church. For Christ has said, "That of such is the kingdom of heaven," which is the church. And he has blessed them with imposition of hands, which is a religious rite, and act of sacred communion, which has never been administered to any but the visible people of God. Christ has declared that they are to be received in his name, as belonging to him, or of his church. They are expressly called disciples: and the apostles were authorized and instructed by their

commission, to disciple and baptize them, as well as adults. Paul says, that the children of believers are holy; but none are ever called holy, but such as are of right church members. They have an interest in the covenant with their parents. The covenant with Abraham was to him and his children in their generations. This was the new and everlasting covenant, by which the church was formed at first, and under which it has continued, though with a difference of external administration, from the beginning to this day. It was not that old covenant which has been abolished; but it was confirmed of God in Christ; who, as the minister of the circumcision, confirmed the promises made to the fathers. It contained the substance of the gospel, which was in it preached unto Abraham. The blessing of this covenant is come upon the Gentiles; who are the adopted children of Abraham, and his heirs according to the promise, entitled to the privileges of his covenant for themselves and their children. They are ingrafted branches of the same olive, the church from which the unbelieving Jews, the natural branches, were broken off by unbelief: which could be no other than that church which had been formed by the Abrahamic covenant; which church, therefore, was not dissolved; and which covenant was not disannulled by the gospel; nor are the children of God's covenanted people deprived of their interest and standing therein. But the promise still continues to them and their children, and to those who are at present afar off, that is, to so many of them as the Lord shall call into his church; into the family of Abraham, who is thus made the father of many nations; even of all those of every nation who are added to the church. These therefore, having an interest in the covenant, are of the church. Both parents and children, are accordingly the proper subjects of baptism, the initiating rite or token of admission into the gospel church, instead of circumcision, which had been enjoined and practised under the former dispensation. And it is a great confirmation of the church membership of infants under the gospel, that the Jews never objected to the christians, that their doctrine deprived their children of the privilege of being in the covenant and church of God; nor did the apostles, or any of the christians, ever attempt to answer any such objection. Besides, it is attested by the ancient fathers, who lived soon after the apostles, that infant baptism had been received and practised in the church all along as an apostolic institution; and it does not appear that the lawfulness of it was called in question by any one for more than 1000 years. All these things being considered, the evidence of the divine right of infant baptism is, I think, clear and full, and sufficient to put the matter beyond all rational doubt.

S E C T I O N III.

WE are now to consider the objections,

And the first is, "that there is no command in scripture for baptizing infants, nor can it be proved, that the apostles baptized any such. We have express accounts of the baptism of men and women; but that infants were, or ought to be admitted as subjects of this ordinance, the scripture saith not. How can this be a divine ordinance, when there is neither precept nor precedent for it?"

I answer, If it any way appears from the scripture, that infants are subjects of baptism, it matters not whether this doctrine be grounded on an express precept or example, or whether it be taught in some other way. Is it not presumption for us to say, that we will not believe this to be the mind of Christ, unless he has revealed it in the particular way that we may pitch upon? The question should be, whether we can find, or gather from the scriptures any sufficient evidence, that infants are to be baptized. If the reasons on which our doctrine and practice is grounded, be good and conclusive, we ought to acquiesce in them. It never can be proved, either by scripture or reason, that consequential evidence is insufficient to determine our judgment, and practice, in matters of religion; or that every part of God's revealed will is delivered in express propositions.

Since the scriptures plainly acknowledge and assert the membership of infants in the gospel church, that they are of the number of Christ's disciples, that they are holy, and have an interest in God's gracious covenant; and since it is owned by all, that, according to the order and rule of the gospel, all those who are visibly of the church, disciples, holy, and in the covenant, are the proper subjects of baptism: the consequence is clear, that infants are to be baptized. And this is equivalent to an express order heretofore. It is as plain and valid a warrant, though it be consequential, as an express order would be.

We have also such precedents in favour of our practice, as, though they may be cavilled at, must, I think, be of great weight with every unbiassed man; precedents which seem to render it morally certain, that infant baptism was practised by the apostles. Three whole families we read of, who were baptized. If there were any children under the age of discretion, in any of these families, they were certainly admitted. Now, though it be not said whether there were any such children, yet it can scarce be doubted that there were, when the following circumstances are well considered. 1. If we should take three families among us, promiscuously, I suppose the probability would be, at least, fifty to one, that there would be young children in some of them. 2. It is not said, or intimated, that there were no such children in these families. But if it had been the case that there were no children in these houses, and if children ought not to be baptized,

there was great reason and necessity that so important and uncommon a circumstance should be mentioned, to prevent a dangerous mistake, which these accounts, left as they stand, would naturally lead men into. For the baptism of these families would naturally be considered as precedents for baptizing other families, in which there were infants. And as the constant and known practice of the church for thousands of years, and the declarations of Christ and his apostles, were in favour of infant church membership; how reasonable must it needs appear to practise household baptism, unless it were plainly testified and guarded against? In short, we have express precedents, or examples, if not of infant baptism, yet of household baptism, infants not excepted; and that too upon the faith or profession of the head of the family. For it is to be carefully noted, that in these accounts it is not said, or intimated, that all in these families were baptized on a personal profession of faith; but only, that the head of the family believed, and thereupon was baptized with all the house. And upon the authority of these precedents of family baptism, in conjunction with the other grounds which have been mentioned, we assert and claim the right of household baptism, on behalf of the families of believers, infants not excepted. And we challenge those who will not admit them, to produce an authentic order or precedent for this their refusal.

As the gospel, though it has changed the initiating sacrament, continues infants in the same standing in the church, which it was well known they had had all along; it is nothing strange that we have not more express orders and precedents touching infant baptism. What need of new precepts and examples, to ascertain a point, which had in effect been long since settled; which all understood, and all agreed in. But how infinitely strange would it be, if infants, who had from the beginning been of the church, by the appointment of God, and the subjects of the initiating ordinance, should be cast out of the church, and cut off from the people of God, without any order or precedent for it in scripture? And yet this we must believe, if we deny their church membership and baptism. For certainly there is neither order or precedent for excluding them from the church, or from the initiating rite.

If the apostles had refused to admit infants into the gospel church by baptism, we should, without all peradventure, have had a plain order not to receive them. The case was such as must, in all reason, have required it. Such a great and important change in the constitution of the church, as would cut off a great part of those who had always been acknowledged to be in the church and covenant of God, must have seemed strange to the Jewish converts; who would naturally have expected that their children were still to be received with them, as heretofore; and would, accordingly, have moved to have them baptized; as the ancient Jewish writers attest was commonly practised at the ad-

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mission of profelytes. At least, they would have enquired, whether the gospel church admitted infants as well as adult believers; which must have given occasion for a plain and express determination of the point, if so great and striking an innovation was to be established. And it would be of great necessity that such a decree should be promulgated and recorded, as a standing rule or canon, to be observed by all the churches. But nothing like this appears in any writings, sacred or profane. We may therefore retort the argument upon our adversaries thus: Since infants had always been received as church members, by the initiating rite, they who refuse still to receive them, ought to be able to produce plain orders or precedents for this their refusal: which since they cannot do, we conclude that the right of church membership still belongs to them, and that they are subjects of baptism.

There was not that occasion for an express mention of the baptism of infants, as of women: for as women had hitherto been admitted to the privileges of church membership, without being circumcised, it might well be doubted, whether baptism, the sacrament of admission into the gospel church, was to be administered to females. To remove this scruple, we have express precedents of female baptism; shewing that persons of either sex are alike proper subjects of this ordinance. But there was no room to doubt, whether the token of church membership were to be applied to infants; nor had it ever been called in question---And yet the New Testament furnishes clear proofs that they are members of the gospel church; and express precedents of household baptism, without exception of infants; as has been shewn; nor is there any thing of weight to be urged against it.

If, after all that has been said, the want of more express orders or precedents for infant baptism stick as a scruple in the minds of any, let the following considerations be added to what has been said. 1. Is it not as strange, and more so, that we have but one express example of infant circumcision, in all the Old Testament, and not one among the Israelites? And yet no doubt, it was practised every day. Is it not strange, that there is neither express precept nor example, in the New Testament, of women's coming to the Lord's supper? And yet no doubt, they did so commonly. Jesus, it seems, baptized more disciples than John. John iv. 1. Is it not strange, that none of the writers of the New Testament, except John, give the least hint that he baptized at all, though John's baptizing is often mentioned by almost all of them? These instances may shew, how little such a negative argument is to be depended on in the present case. 2. Is it not a manifest sign of prejudice, and an unfair mind, to think there is no sufficient warrant for infant baptism, unless there be express orders or precedents for it; and yet refuse to receive infants as of the church, though there be neither precept nor precedent to warrant or justify our refusing them that privilege, with which they were

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were invested by God, and held it without dispute thousands of years? Is not this to strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel? 3. Does it become us to disregard, and refuse to admit such evidence as must be acknowledged to be of weight, and stand cavilling, that the case might have been made plainer? I grant it might, if God had pleased. And so might many other truths, which yet we have sufficient reason to believe. Our opponents must own, that if infant baptism be contrary to the mind of Christ, this would have been much plainer, had there been an express order against it; and much dispute and trouble would have been prevented. The case is left just as plain as Christ has thought fit it should be. And it belongs not to us to object, that the evidence is not such as we should like best; but to enquire seriously, humbly, and prayerfully, what is truth; and thankfully to close with it, upon any good evidence of it that we can find. 4. Let me ask the objector, What he would have? What proof would satisfy him? Would it give satisfaction, if the order had run thus: "Go teach all nations, baptizing them, and their children?" You could as easily and fairly evade this, as you do the express proofs we bring of infant church membership. Christ says expressly, that the kingdom of heaven is, or consists of little children; and it is not denied, that the kingdom of heaven is the church; yet we are told, that these little children, which are of the church, are not infants, but adults, resembling little children in humility. The apostle says expressly, that the children of believers are Holy. A character never once given in scripture to any but church members: yet this avails nothing. A new sense, unknown in the scriptures, is invented, and put upon the word, though it makes nonsense of the text. We bring express scripture to prove, that the promise is to the children, as well as the parents; that believers are accounted the children and heirs of Abraham, according to the promise; and that his blessing is come upon the Gentiles: And the right of church membership for his natural posterity, was certainly one article of this blessing. Yet our opponents go on "wriggling and wrangling," against all this evidence, upon no better foundation than their own arbitrary conjectures and hypothesis. While men are in this humour, what confidence can we have, that, if there had been an express order for infant baptism, they would not set their inventions to work to explain it away? And we might be told, that the children to be baptized are such as are capable of professing faith; or that they are such as resemble infants in humility; or that they are spiritual children, who imitate the faith of the first converts; or that they are to be baptized after they have been first taught, and have given evidence of their effectual calling, &c. In short, a fair and honest mind will embrace the truth upon any sufficient proof, whether direct or consequential. But when the integrity of the mind is corrupted and distorted, by prejudices, and fondness for particular schemes, the light that is in men becomes darkness; and ways will

The Objection from Mat. xxviii. 19. Answered. 81

will be found to ward off conviction, for the most part, by any arguments whatever. I have considered this objection the more largely, because, though it has really no weight in it, yet it is apt enough to amuse and puzzle weak and simple minds, and to breed scruples, which sometimes prove very troublesome and hurtful.

It is said by some, "that it is not being in the covenant or church that gives a right to baptism; but a divine order to that purpose."

But to what purpose is this said, except to raise a dust, and keep up a fruitless altercation? You acknowledge that it is according to the order and rule of the gospel, that all those be received as the subjects of baptism, who have visibly an interest in the covenant, and appear to be such as are to be received into the gospel church. Whether, therefore, their being visibly in covenant and of the church gives them the right to baptism or not; yet, by your own acknowledgment it proves, or evidences an unquestionable right thereto. The allegation in the objection is, indeed, most unreasonable: but if we should admit it, for argument sake; the church membership of infants being proved, their right to baptism is undeniable, as long as it is allowed that all church members are the proper subjects of baptism.

Another principal objection is, that "according to the gospel order, faith and repentance, or at least a credible profession thereof, are required of all previously or in order to their being baptized. The apostles were first to teach those whom they baptized. Mat. xxviii. 19. Christ puts believing before baptism, when he says, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." Mark xvi. 16. And Peter says to the Jews, who being pricked in their hearts, asked, what they should do; "Repent and be baptized." Acts ii. 38. And when the eunuch moved, that he might be baptized, Philip said to him, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." Acts viii. 37. We read also of several who, agreeably to this rule, were baptized, professing their faith and repentance. If repentance and faith are the necessary conditions of baptism, infants cannot be admitted: for they make no profession, and give no evidence of these qualifications."

Answer. To shew that this objection is without any weight, we need only open our bibles, and read the several texts that are brought to support it. Let us take them in their order.

The first is, Mat. xxviii. 19. I have before observed, that the proper signification of the Greek is, "Go make all nations disciples, (or proselytes) baptizing them--teaching them, &c." as our opponents grant: And that this is a good warrant for the baptism of the infants, who according to the scriptures, and the constant sense and practice of the Jews, in the admission of proselytes, are to be accounted disciples or proselytes, as well as the parents; and are therefore to be admitted by the same outward rite. And to say that infants can no otherwise become disciples than

82. *The Objection from Mark xvi. 16. Answered.*

than by being taught, is no better than a mean begging of the very point to be proved. Whenever the apostles made a disciple of the parent, the right and privilege of disciples was given to the children; who were as such to be baptized, together with the parents, according to the apostles orders, to disciple and baptize all nations.

And if we should understand the word here used as signifying to instruct or indoctrinate, there would be no reason for any one to conclude, that infants may not be baptized till they are first taught--No such thing is said, or in the least implied. Christ's disciples are indeed to be taught, as well as baptized; children as well as adults; as far, and as soon as they are capable of it. But that they may not be baptized till after they have been first taught, there is not one word, nor iota in the whole paragraph. And to argue from the bare order of the words, that indoctrination is a necessary prerequisite to baptism, in all cases, is to build upon quicksand indeed. For it is well known, that things are often mentioned in scripture, in a promiscuous or inverted order.--Nay, if the order of the words were any solid foundation to argue upon, we might, in this way, prove that it was the will of Christ, that the apostles should make disciples, by first baptizing them, and then teaching them. For the instructions Christ gave them when he sent them forth, stand in this order; "Go disciple all nations, baptizing them--teaching them," &c. But we lay no stress at all upon such precarious arguments. The truth is, some are to be taught before, and in order to their being baptized. Others are by baptism to be introduced into the school of Christ, and put under the discipline of the church before, and in order to their being taught. Adults we grant, are to be first taught, and to make a profession of faith, in order to their being baptized; and that for two reasons. 1. They are immediately capable of it. 2. They have no visible right or meetness to be received as members of the church of Christ, till they profess their faith in him. And we may add, that it is not the will of Christ that any such should be taken into his school, without their free consent. On the contrary, there are two reasons why the infants of believers should by baptism be received into the church, without their being first taught, and professing their faith. 1. They are not at present capable of it. 2. Their church membership and right to baptism is manifest without it from the scriptures; as has been shewn. And it is the will of Christ, that they be entered into his school immediately, previous to their actual consent. A profession of faith, does not more evidence the right of a believer to baptism, than his infant child's right to the same is evidenced by the scriptures, which declare that, "of such is the kingdom of heaven, that the promise is to them, and that they are holy." This text then contains nothing against infant baptism, and I have elsewhere shewn, that it furnishes a good argument in favour of it. The next passage we have to consider is, Mark xvi.

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The Objection from Acts ii. 38. Answered. 83

15, 16. "Preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." If this text does not contain so much in favour of infant baptism as the other, yet certainly there is nothing against it. It is true, faith and baptism are here required in order to salvation. But whether in order to salvation, faith be required before baptism in all cases, or in any case, is not said; nor can it be proved from this text; which only contains a promise of salvation to those who believe and are baptized. And I presume it will be allowed, that if any one should first be baptized, and afterwards should believe; this promise would belong to him, as really as if he had first believed, and then was baptized. -- If any one should be baptized upon a hypocritical profession of faith, and afterwards should become a true believer, he would no doubt be saved; nor would it be required of him that he be again baptized. And though we grant that a profession of faith is required of an unbaptized adult, in order to his being baptized; yet it is an abuse of scripture, to argue that infants are not to be baptized till they believe, because believing is mentioned before baptism in this place, which by the acknowledgment of our opponents, "Speaks only of those who are capable of attending to the preaching of the gospel, and of actual believing." They do not apply to infants the damnatory sentence against unbelievers; and it is equally unreasonable, to urge their want of faith, as an objection to their being admitted to baptism. -- In short, I can find nothing in these words, that makes the least difficulty in the matter; unless we will be so ridiculously absurd as to imagine, that infants and adult believers cannot both be the subjects of baptism; or that the mention of the one alone, implies the denial of the other.

In Acts ii. 38. Peter exhorts his hearers to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Those whom he thus exhorts were all adults. For no one preaches to young infants. We grant that repentance is required of unbaptized adults, in order to their being baptized. But does he so much as hint, that infants are not to be admitted? No. But in the next words asserts, that the same promise which belonged to them, and which he holds up as a warrant and encouragement to them, to repent and be baptized, did also belong to their children. But these words have been before considered.

The same remark is to be made on the words of Philip to the Eunuch, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized." Any Pedobaptist, must, upon his own principles, have said the same, upon the like occasion.

The examples of those who were baptized upon a profession of faith, are sometimes brought as an objection against infant baptism. These, we grant, are a proof that believers are the subjects of baptism. We grant further, that they are no proof that infants are subjects. But it is strange it should ever be thought that these examples make any thing against the baptism of infants. Cannot

84 *Infant Baptism no Part of Popery, &c.*

Cannot adult believers be admitted, unless infants be rejected? Is there not room enough in the church for both? A thousand instances of one sort, are no argument against the admission of the other. The truth is, we have not many certain instances of adult baptism mentioned particularly in the New Testament. Several of these were persons of note, who had no children. Of others, it appears, that if there were children in their families, as is highly probable, they were baptized with them. And some that are confidently supposed to have been adults, might a great part of them have been infants, for any thing that appears to the contrary; particularly the 3000 added to the church on the day of Pentecost. But among all those, who are said to have been baptized upon a profession of faith, it is remarkable that we find not one that was born of Christian parents, or was, on our principles, a fit subject of baptism in infancy. We have in the New Testament the history of the church for thirty years after Christ's ascension, in all which there is not one instance that in the least countenances their practice, who are against the baptism of the children of believers, till they are of age to profess their faith. Wherein they differ from us, they have most certainly neither precept nor example in scripture to support them.

Upon the whole, this objection, which has often been held up with so much parade, is like a vapour; which, beheld at a distance, may look as if there might be something in it; but upon a nearer view, is found to be as light and unsubstantial as the air, while we endeavour to handle it, we can find nothing in it.

It is objected by some, that "Christ was baptized in adult age; and we ought herein to follow his example."

Answer. John's baptism, with which Christ was baptized, was not instituted till Christ was of adult age. How could it be expected that he should have the ordinance administered to him, before it was a divine ordinance? We might as well argue against infant circumcision, because Abraham was circumcised in adult age. But Christ in his infancy was dedicated to God, and received into the number of his people, according to the ordinances then in use: which may serve as a precedent and pattern to christians to dedicate their children to God in baptism, the rite of induction to the christian church. Christ's baptism was the token of his solemn consecration to his public ministry; signifying his anointing with the Holy Ghost to the offices of prophet, priest, and king, which he was to execute, and was accordingly inaugurated at his entering on the public discharge of these his offices, when he was about thirty years of age. There were many peculiar circumstances attending Christ's baptism, which are not imitable by us.

It is objected, "That infant baptism is a part of popery, the basis of national churches, and worldly establishments; that it unites the church and world, and keeps them together."

Answer.

Answer. Infant baptism is grounded on the scriptures ; and is commonly practised in those churches that are not, nor ever were subject to the Pope ; therefore, it is not a part of Popery, though practised, as divers other ordinances are, in the Roman church.

Infant baptism is not the basis of national churches, and worldly establishments. Infants were church members long before there was a national church in the world ; which was not till the Horeb covenant. That particular constitution of a church, and form of administration, whereby it becomes national, has no connection with, or dependance upon infant baptism. A national church may as well be formed upon the principle of Antepedobaptism as any other. If the church of England should renounce infant baptism, and yet retain its present constitution in other respects, it would still be, and might as well continue, a national church as ever. There may be a national church, though not one half of the nation are of it. And there would be no national church, though all the individuals of the nation were members of congregational churches. And as for worldly establishments of religion, it is too plain to need insisting on, that infant baptism no way affects them. Infant baptism stands as well without, as with human establishments ; and human establishments can stand as well without, as with infant baptism.

Infant baptism does not unite the church and the world, and keep them together. If by the world we mean those that are not of the visible church ; how can the baptizing of such infants as are of the church, unite the church with those that do not belong to it ? If by the world be meant professed christians, who are manifestly unmeet and unworthy of christian communion, infant baptism neither unites the church, nor keeps it united with any such. It is owing to the neglect or abuse of discipline, when such remain united with the church. Or if any should mean by the world, visible Christians, who are secretly hypocritical ; it is not the will of Christ that the church should be separated from these, till their hypocrisy becomes manifest. Nor would the abolishing of infant baptism make such a separation.

It is objected, " That the answer of a good conscience is required in baptism, in order to its being of saving advantage, 1 Pet. iii. 21. And as infants are incapable of this, they are not subjects of baptism." I answer, Though the answer or engagement of a good conscience must be joined with the outward washing with water, when the subject is capable of it, yet this makes nothing against infant baptism. For if the answer of a good conscience be afterwards annexed to the sacramental washing received in infancy, such a baptism is as valid, and as available to salvation, as if the washing with water, and the answer of a good conscience, had been at the same time. And infants are by their baptism, bound to the answer of a good conscience ; which they are to recognize and perform, when they are capable of it. Indeed,

86 *Why Infants not admitted to the Lord's Supper.*

deed, this passage speaks plainly in our favour. For the apostle compares baptism to the ark of Noah, as being the figure or antitype of it, bearing a resemblance to it. Noah by faith, prepared the ark, for the saving of himself and his house. As his children were received with him into the ark, so the children of believers belong to the church, and are the subjects of baptism, together with their parents; which bears in this respect, the figure and resemblance of the ark.

It is also objected, that "if infants are members of the church, and subjects of baptism, they ought also to be admitted to partake of the Lord's supper, which is an ordinance to which all the members of the Christian church have a right. And accordingly it was customary with the ancient Christians, who practised infant baptism, to administer the Lord's supper also to them. And they who disapprove the communicating of infants, should, if they would be consistent, disallow the baptizing of them."

Answer. We grant that infants, as church members, have an external right to all the ordinances of the visible church, as far, and soon as they are actually capable of, and meet for them. As they are immediately capable and meet subjects of baptism, they are to be admitted thereto without delay. As soon as they are capable of receiving instruction from the word, they should be brought to give their attendance to it; and when they can so far understand the nature and design of the Lord's supper, and have such a measure of knowledge and faith, that they can discern the Lord's body, and examine themselves, and so eat of that bread, and drink of that cup; it is not only their right, but their duty to do so, without delay. Though an infant may have a right to an estate, of which he is an heir, yet he is not admitted to possess, occupy, and improve it, till he is of capacity for it. And such is the nature and design of the Lord's supper, that a right attendance on it, requires an actual capacity and present meetness for it; which infants have not. And it is this want of capacity and meetness, and not a want of right to church privileges, that is the reason why we do not admit them. But this reason does not exclude them from baptism; of which they are as capable and meet subjects now, as they were of circumcision formerly. They are capable of the sign, and the thing signified; of coming under the obligations, and having the grace and privileges of the covenant secured and conveyed to them; of being solemnly dedicated to God; recognized and admitted, as his visible church and people. These things they are capable of in infancy. And to signify and effect these, is the design and use of baptism, as has been observed.

We acknowledge it was an error in the ancient Christians, to administer the Lord's supper to infants. They might, probably, be led into it, by considering that the Jewish infants did eat of the passover; which, they might suppose, answered to the Lord's supper;

per; & by mistaking what Christ said of the necessity of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood. The reason was plausible, though inconclusive. And they were, upon further consideration, convinced of their mistake; and laid this practice wholly aside. But we do not find that the divine right of infant baptism was ever called in question by them, or the practice of it discontinued. Their admitting infants to the Lord's supper, though irregular, was yet a less and more excuseable error, than it is to shut them wholly out of the church. Though a young infant may not be fit to sit at the table, and eat the meat of strong men; yet this would not, by any means, be so improper, as to turn him out of doors, and not own him as belonging to the family.

Thus I have considered all the chief objections against infant baptism, that I have met with; which I have aimed to state fairly and candidly, though briefly---I can find no weight in them. But if, after all, it should seem to any, that there is some real difficulty in the case, that they know not how to remove; this ought not to overthrow or stagger their belief of the doctrine itself, if the arguments in favour of it are found to be conclusive, or of more weight than the contrary objections. Yea; if any should think there is only a greater probability for, than against it, they ought to be determined in their judgment and practice, by probable evidence, till they can obtain such proofs as are more full and satisfactory.

I intended to have added some reflections upon the whole argument. But here I must aim to be as brief as possible; as this discourse is already much longer than was intended.

It appears, I trust, that our opponents have no reason to say, as they are wont to do with great confidence, that there is nothing in the scriptures in favour of infant baptism, but they plainly declare against it. We have searched the scriptures, and find nothing at all contrary to infant baptism; and plain proofs that infants are members of the gospel church, and that all church members are the subjects of baptism. Whether this does not amount to a fair and full proof, let every one who has the reason of a man consider and judge.

We learn also, the error of rebaptizing those, who have been baptized in their infancy. This practice cannot be justified either by precept or example, or any good reasons. Infant baptism administered by sprinkling, we have examined by the scriptures, and find it to be well-warranted. To renounce it therefore, and be baptized over again, is utterly wrong. And though we charitably believe that those who have gone into this practice, have done it conscientiously, yet their consciences were therein misguided, and they have entangled themselves by the wrong step they have taken, and given satan an advantage against them. Having openly renounced communion with all christians, but those of their own party, they too often appear to be exceedingly hardened against all means that can

can be used for convincing them of their error; and take it with great scorn and impatience, to have it suggested to them that perhaps they are in a mistake. And if any such suspicions should ever arise in their minds, yet what a strong temptation will they have to wink hard against the light, when it begins to enter into their minds, and to discover to them, what they cannot bear the thoughts of, that in the height of their confidence they have been wrong. It is very unhappy when christians run themselves into such sad intanglements, and yet their scruples and prejudices fixed and riveted.

Let such then as labour under doubts and scruples, respecting the validity of the baptism they have received in their infancy, be advised not to be hasty and rash, in taking a step of so much importance, as the renouncing of this their baptismal dedication to God, and the communion of those churches, which have had evident tokens of the gracious presence of Christ in their administrations. We are far from urging you to give up your consciences to our direction. We claim no dominion over the faith of any one, but wish you to examine and judge for yourselves, what is truth, and what is right. If we can give you any assistance in searching the scriptures, by pointing out to your notice any evidences of the truth which you may have overlooked, we would willingly, in this way, be helpers of your joy. Nor do we object to your considering candidly what may be offered on the other side: for we are persuaded that a good cause will suffer no damage by being thoroughly examined in the clearest light. But remember there is a great difference between a difficulty and a clear reason, between being puzzled, and having a rational and satisfactory conviction; between having scruples about the regularity of infant baptism, and having sufficient arguments against it. Take time to weigh things fairly and justly; and let no one drive you along blindly, faster than you can see your way plain before you. Be willing to take pains, and use all the helps you can come at, to get a right understanding of the grounds and reasons on either side. If there be any thing you cannot comprehend, seek the assistance of those who may be able to instruct you. And if, after all, you should be unsatisfied, rather wait in suspense, till God shall vouchsafe you further light, than change blindly and at a venture, as many have done. And cherish a meek and humble disposition. "God will guide the meek in judgment, and teach the meek his way." Take heed that Satan does not blow you up with spiritual pride, which is more odious and dangerous than any other. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of a fool, than of him." And take heed of wilfulness, of evil surmisings, and prejudices: and let it be your daily and earnest prayer to God, that he would guide and keep you in his own way, and grant you that wisdom and understanding which is needful for your direction. And beware that no man de-

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ceive and bias you with crafty artifices, and confident pretences, instead of sound reasons. "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God; for many false prophets are gone out into the world." If there are any that are manifestly acted by a party spirit; any that would sour and leaven your minds with uncharitableness; any that would lead you away from the scriptures, to follow enthusiastic impressions and impulses; any who endeavour to persuade by noise and clamour, and fierceness, and striking the passions, instead of enlightning the understanding by plain scripture, and fair calm reasoning; any that endeavour to move men from their stedfastness, by flatteries, or censures, by confidence, by pitying the blindness of others, or boasting of their own illuminations; such as these you have reason to be cautious of hearkening to. Take heed that you be not imposed on with chaff instead of wheat; with vain dreams and hurtful prejudices, instead of divine truths. Make the scriptures the rule of your religion, according to the plain and natural interpretation of them. If any one can offer you light from the scriptures, attend to it; but resolve to see and judge for yourselves. And let it be your care conscientiously to practice agreeably to what you have already learned of the will of God. This is a good preservative against dangerous mistakes, and being carried about with divers and strange doctrines. "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

Let those who are established in the belief of this doctrine, which has thus far been discoursed of, be thankful to God for the kind regard he has shewn for the offspring of his covenant people. Let parents hereby be encouraged to devote their children to him in baptism, without needless delay; and also to pray for them, with a stedfast faith and trust in that promise; which is to believers and their children. If any of your children should die in their infancy, resign them patiently to the mercy of a covenant God, with a comfortable persuasion that they are of the number of those little ones, who belong to the kingdom of heaven. If they should live to grow up under your care, train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, hoping and expecting a special blessing on these labours of love. Consider that these children are of the church of Christ. He has put them under your care to be brought up for him. Let your belief of this animate your hopes, your prayers, and endeavours for them. They who disbelieve and deny this article of our faith cut themselves off from these comfortable and encouraging views, with respect to their children. And how far their neglect of dedicating them to God in his appointed ordinance may expose such families to the tokens of the divine displeasure, ought seriously to be considered. And yet we hope, with respect to those of them who are the true people of God, that the promise is to their children as well as ours

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though they do not believe it, or take the comfort, or make the improvement of it, which they ought. We willingly hope and trust, that their unbelief in this point, will not make the faith or promise of God without effect; but that they will have the joy of seeing the accomplishment thereof, in the blessings of divine grace upon their children. But let us shew that the doctrine of infant baptism is, with us, not a barren speculation, but a comforting encouraging and engaging motive to the discharge of family duties. If we believe that God has reserves of new covenant blessings for our families, according to his gracious promise, let us use the means in order to the conveyance of these blessings to them. And let us order our house with piety, gravity and wisdom, as becomes the church and house of God, walking therein with a perfect heart.

And though we would with pleasure express our christian affection to those who dissent from us in this point, when they appear to be sincere in the profession and practice of the fundamentals of christianity; yet I think we should not give any countenance to the attempts of those who set themselves to vilify and set at nought our sacred administration, and sour the minds of the simple with the leaven of uncharitableness and schism. If we are established in this truth, and have that love and zeal for it which we ought to have, we should not look on with cool indifference, while mistaken men are endeavouring to rob us of this sacred depositum, delivered to the saints. This article of our holy faith is of too much importance to be parted with. We should not act so inconsistent a part, as to do any thing that may strengthen their hands, and give them an advantage, who would "by fair" speeches deceive the hearts of the simple," and persuade them to renounce communion with the churches of the saints in the holy ordinances of Christ. And that we may be able to contend for this truth with greater skill and success, let us labour to be furnished with such clear, scriptural arguments as may be sufficient to convince, or at least silence, gainsayers.---Let us study and digest well the reasons on which this doctrine and practice of the church is grounded, that so we may all, to greater advantage, be fellow helpers to the truth. And we need not fear, but that the cause of God will be supported, and in the end will triumph, whatever opposition may be made to it.

In the conclusion, I would turn myself to the rising generation, who are the children of the covenant, and have, by baptism, been admitted into the church of God. After having said so much for you, in pleading your cause, and maintaining your rights, in opposition to those who would cast you out of the inheritance of the Lord, let me have your attention, while I say a few things to you. Be thankful to God, that he has been pleased to invest you with the privileges, and lay you under the bonds, of his gracious covenant; and let the consideration quicken and encourage you in seeking and serving the

the God of your fathers. Though the grace of the new covenant be promised, in a particular manner, to the children of God's covenant people, yet you are not to expect a saving application of it to any of you, unless you diligently seek for it, in the use of his appointed means. "He will for this be enquired of by you." But for your encouragement, "He hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain." These promises furnish the children of the covenant with a peculiar plea, in their prayers to God, for his converting and sanctifying grace. Avouch then your fathers God for your God; and let Ephraim's prayer be yours, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." And labour to get a good understanding of the grounds and principles of the Christian doctrine; but rest not in a doctrinal knowledge, without a practical and experimental acquaintance with its divine power and efficacy to sanctify you in spirit, soul, and body. And as your place and standing in the church obliges you in duty, as well as gives you a visible right, to attend all the ordinances which Christ has instituted for the edification of his church, particularly the ordinance of the Lord's supper, I would now invite you to come to this sacred feast, with that due preparation which is required in a worthy approach thereto: and by a sincere and solemn recognition of your baptismal vows, make the act of your parents, in dedicating you to God, your own act; and let your whole conversation be as becomes members of the church. As you belong to the school of Christ, labour to make proficiency daily under the instructions and discipline of it.---You are admitted into the society of God's professing people; improve your relation and connection with them for your improvement in the graces and virtues of the Christian temper and life, that you may be daily growing up to the measure of perfect men in Christ, and to a meetness to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Be the companions of them that fear the Lord, and be not companions of fools.---"He that walketh with the wise shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

But these things have been often inculcated, and therefore I shall not enlarge upon them; but shall leave with you the solemn charge of David to his beloved son and successor: "And now, my children, know the God of your fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, and willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts; If you seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off for ever."

BOSTON, Sept. 3, 1781.

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unfolds more fully those which were then exhibited. In delivering this Discourse, the author was obliged to omit large portions, and since now published, at once to give some new views of the subject, and to

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Printed by and for T. B. Wright, Crafts Street, sold in London by
T. Nelson & Son, 47, White Chapel; the 15, Moles, Paul's Church
Yard; Mr. D. Fenton, 107, High Holborn; and by the Booksellers
in general.

Price Eight-pence.

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